■ Lifestyle

Monaco royal spent nearly entire visit with poor children

■ Sports

RP chess team places 12th at Olympiad

■ Sunday Biz / B2

SM's Tessie Sy makes it again to Fortune's list of most powerful women

■ SIM

American priest, avid Norcanian, marks 50 years of service to RP

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SMART

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Sunday

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Lawmaker wants to hike taxes on 'nip-and-tuck' set

By Carlos Pablo

Sunday, October 31, 2004 ■ 36 pages | vol. 19 | no. 326

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Bin Laden warns US

Jolts campaign for presidential poll on Nov. 2

OSAMA BIN LADEN: The reasons are still there to repeat what happened.

Army hospital chief sacked for using old medicines

By Alexis Pope

Living inside a cemetery, he fears the living more

By Jerome Aning

NEIGHBOR (l-r) says our tourist, David L. Moore, superintendent... Manila American Cemetery and Memorial in Fort Bonifacio, seen for the first resting place of 17,206 US soldiers killed in WWII.

LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL: A snapper of blue skies and a skyscape of Makati frame the cemetery as a child skirting through the graveyard at the Libingan ng mga Bayanin Fort Bonifacio. So will the living starting today flock in unfathomable numbers to cemeteries all over the country to honor their dead and frolic through the remembered beauty of their lives.

Matatag boys of PMA '71: The ruling class of AFP, PNP

By Frank Cimatu

SPECIAL REPORT

A3
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2004
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

RP backs hunt for Pinoy's abductors despite threat

By TJ Burgonio

DEPUTY: the threat by a splinter Taliban group to kill a Filipino diplomat and two other hostages unless security forces in Afghanistan called off their pursuit, the Philippines is backing a massive manhunt for the kidnappers.

"That's the nature of terrorism... abduction. We condemn terrorism and we are in this effort to fight terrorism," Foreign Undersecretary Rafael Seguis told reporters after attending a meeting of the Crisis Management Committee of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Asked if the government supported the manhunt for the kidnappers, he said: "Of course. We rely on the authorities in Afghanistan."

The three hostages—Angelito Sayson of the Philippines, British woman Annette Flanigan and Kuwaiti woman Jehaija Rishtha—had helped organize Afghanistan's first direct presidential election on Oct. 9. They were abducted on Thursday.

Afghan forces, backed by foreign peacekeepers, spread out Friday through a valley west of Kabul to hunt down the abductors, according to news reports from Afghanistan. Helicopters from the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force also helped in the search.

But Akbar Agha of the Taliban splinter group warned: "If the US and Afghan forces find any Mujahideen (holy warriors) during operations, we will kill them."

Iraq-style kidnappings

Members of a group called the Jaish-e-Muslimeen have claimed responsibility for the kidnappings.

The three hostages were part of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan's (Unama's) Joint Electoral Committee which oversaw the elections, said by interim President Hamid Karzai.

The Associated Press, in a report from Kabul, said foreign aid workers had been warned to restrict their movements around the Afghan capital amid fears of Iraq-style threats following the abduction of the three UN election workers.

Police deployed seven snipers for questioning over the kidnappings but investigators appeared to be closer to establishing whether Taliban-linked militants or criminals were responsible.

After the kidnapping, staff of aid agencies were told to restrict all but essential movements around Kabul—which is patrolled by thousands of Nato peacekeepers, making it usually one of the safest places in the country.

"It's an unusual development," said Ted Barker of the aid group CARE International. "We've not seen this kind of incident in Kabul before and I think we are still trying to figure out if it is a new trend or a one-off. Until it's resolved, we won't really know."

Same commitment

Seguis said Ambassador Luzes Baja, Philippine permanent representative to the UN, had been closely coordinating with UN officials and leaders and had been sending updates to Manila.

The Philippine Embassy in Pakistan, which has diplomatic and consular jurisdiction over Afghanistan, is also keeping in close contact with the authorities and UN officials in Kabul on the progress of the efforts to seek the hostages' release.

Seguis said that while Sayson, 34, a foreign service officer [illegible] on official leave from the DFA, the government was drawing the "same commitment" to win his safe release as in the case of Filipino truck Angelo de la Cruz.

UN Resident Coordinator in the Philippines Deborah Landey (left) and Foreign Undersecretary Rafael Seguis have a meeting of the crisis management team that met yesterday to discuss the abduction of Filipino diplomat Angelito Sayson in Afghanistan. AFP

Solons say Abaya, officers to blame for AFP's image

By Carlito Pablo

LAWMAKERS yesterday lashed out at newly retired defense boss of the Philippine Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya for blaming politicians and the media for the bad image of the military.

Led by House Majority Leader Rep. Prospero Nograles, the congressmen said Abaya had only himself to blame for failure to institute significant reforms in the military during his 15-month term at the top, particularly his supposed drive declaring on the use of suspected AFP cooperator Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia.

"Why blame the media and politicians? Does he expect the people to pretend nothing happened? Unless," an incensed Nograles said in an interview.

He said Abaya should get angry instead at his "own people for damaging the AFP."

"It's the military whose hands got caught in the cookie jar. They are not above the law. It's their responsibility to restore their institution," Nograles said.

Rep. Marcelino Libanan (NPC, Eastern Samar) said Abaya used Congress and the media as "scapegoats for the AFP leaders' failure to punish Garcia and other corruptors in the Armed Forces, which has caused demoralization among the soldiery."

"The buck stops in retired General Abaya's office," said Libanan, a member of the powerful Committee on Appropriations.

He recalled that Camp Aguinaldo had been made center of the Garcia case as early as February 2004, "but it took the military eight months before opening their mouths" about it.

"Clearly, there was no firm resolve on General Abaya's part to get to the bottom of the Garcia case and punish all those involved in the corruption scandal," Libanan said.

Rep. Mayo Almario Gahol, Davao Oriental said Abaya should be "humble enough to admit his shortcomings."

"General Abaya will has to explain why the Garcia case was treated lightly or why the AFP failed to implement a recommendation by the Feliciano Commission to reform the procurement system in the Armed Forces to eliminate corruption," he said.

Rep. Teofisto Guingona (Kampi, Pambansang Lakas) echoed criticisms in responding to Abaya.

"I shall leave him alone in his moment of remorse as he takes inventory of events as he takes in the summer of his military career to ponder who is distorting the image of the AFP" said Guingona, chair of the House committee on national defense.

"What is the small group of corrupt generals, past and present, who had intellectually and systematically raided the AFP coffers, or those lawmakers who must such shenanigans expected?" he said.

Last week, Golez said his committee would continue its investigation into how much corruption in the military despite calls by House leaders to terminate the probe as the cases against Garcia before the different courts had resulted to acquittals.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. yesterday advised the media to ignore the retired officer's remarks. Pimentel said: "It is the last gasp of a military officer trailing his career in a tattered corruption."

Meanwhile, Malacañang yesterday urged critics of Abaya to give the former AFP chief of staff a chance to prove his mettle as head of the Bases Conversion Development Authority, particularly in the extension of employment for the 20,000 displaced JUSMAG-Clark and US Military Advisory Group property in Fort Stotsenburg. With Michael Lim Ubac and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

Nene to Abu: Sweep up corruption

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE NEW United Nations chief of staff should use the "power of the broom" to cleanse the institution's backyard of corruption, Senate President Franklin Drilon told Nene Pimentel in early morning.

Pimentel said Lt. Gen. Efren Abu, Abu's appointment has given him "a golden opportunity to crack down on rebel officers in the top command to root out corruption in the AFP."

And he can do this by "using the broom to cleanse the backyard of the AFP," the senator said in an interview.

Pimentel said Abu's first order—the abolition the 3-6 (compulsory study) year formerly held by Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia—was "of the most purely symbolic."

Drilon—General Abu follows through decisively to identify the corrupt officers, whoever they might be," the cession of people's trust in the military establishment would continue, the senator asserted.

Garcia is under investigation by the Ombudsman for alleged unexplained wealth. He is also facing charges before a court-martial for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, and conduct prejudicial to military discipline.

Pimentel said it remained to be seen if Abu would be any different from his predecessors. He noted that former Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga himself had been reported to reform the AFP when he assumed in office 19 months ago.

Avoid the rich, powerful, Aglipay tells PNP execs

By Tonette Orejas, Philippine Juanis Cruz and Marlon Ramos, INQ Searcher Lupon Bureau

CEBU CITY, Philippines—Avoid the rich and powerful.

This was the advice of Philippine Standard Police Director Edgar Aglipay to regional and police directors at last Friday's command conference with Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, Cordillera and Central Luzon PNP officials.

Aglipay also asked the police officials to be spared less time in their offices and devote more time to their policemen in the field and their respective communities.

"If police put in your office or aren't often in the company of your governors and rich friends, nothing will happen to the PNP [or as he with our people," he said.

By that, Aglipay means "staying out, eating with cops, making them feel you are one of them, joining the patrols, setting examples, being passionate in doing your job."

He cautioned police officials not to pay lip service to the job. "Walk the beat," he said. "That's the only way we can get the respect of our people."

Aglipay also urged his subordinates to be more accessible to the media. "Why? Because that's how it should be. We are transparent. We're not hiding anything," he said.

Taking a dig at the scandal that has rocked the Armed Forces, Aglipay said: "If the media are not allowed to come in, they might think some talking but out of [their] control."

All the directors, he said, would be for the PNP's "quest to bring back the respect of our officers."

At Camp Vicente Lim in Laguna, Aglipay exhorted policemen to lead simple lives and avoid ostentation in the wake of allegations of graft and corruption in the military.

"As public servants, [police] should live simply. Let us help the government cut cost funds. We should lead also as examples to the public," he told police officers.

He said he himself has avoided wearing "excessive jewelry" and using police highway patrol units on vacuous reluctance he's using.

As head of the PNP's uniformed officers, Aglipay said he decided to use the uniform used by military policemen "to show you that I am proud to be a police officer like you."

Aglipay also told reporters that there are no conspiracy cells in the PNP saying that every single one is one being open or silenced.

But he urged journalists to help the police in documenting alleged corruption in the PNP.

"It is a good thing that you are here and that you ask questions regarding the fields. For we, we have nothing to hide here," he told members of the media.

Finance officers of regional police units generated P50,000 in several seconds to show how they had spent the money allocated to their respective offices.

Strong quake hits Zambales

MAGNITUDE earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale shook Central Luzon early Saturday but caused no damage, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said.

The quake, which was tectonic in origin, struck at 5:24 a.m. with its epicenter off the coast about 121 kilometers west of Iba, Zambales.

Few people noticed the quake as it was located too far out to sea, the Phivolcs said, adding that no aftershocks were expected.

Although about five south quakes hit the Philippines every day, few if any are felt and only three major destructive tremors have been recorded in more than 30 years, the institute said. AFP

STARRY STARRY NIGHT
After the plastic pumpkins of Halloween come the capiz lanterns of Christmas. Harol pointed for a stained-glass effect, they're already on sale on the streets.

Boracay resort owners urged to use gov't treatment facilities

By Jerome Aning

KALIBO, Philippines—Faced with delay for the long weekend, the Philippine Tourism Authority yesterday asked hotel and resort owners to use the government's fully operational water and sewage treatment plants on the island in order to prevent its contamination.

In a statement, PTA general manager and chief executive officer Robert Dean Barbers urged establishments on Boracay to avail of the services of the PTA-water and sewage treatment plants in order to save the idyllic island from environmental degradation before it's too late.

The PTA recently completed the Boracay Integrated Water and Infrastructure Project (BIWI) with the objective of improving and expanding the island's water supply and sewage facilities.

Barbers said the water and sewage treatment plants would support and sustain a master development plan that would enhance the viability of Boracay as a world-class tourist destination and, at the same time, maintain its environment and cultural assets.

Barbers said, however, that so far less than half of the commercial establishments on Boracay were connected to the government's centralized treatment plants.

"The irony of it all is that the government is totally supportive of the resort owners and Boracay, but most of them ignore this privilege," he said.

Barbers said that based on the BIDP report, only 48 percent of the resort and hotel owners availed themselves of the waste water treatment facilities, while only 23-30 percent were connected to the PTA's potable water supply.

He said the problems with sea pests of the business establishments on Boracay were that there septic tanks were dangerously close to the sea, and that some of their sources of potable water, particularly those within the proximity of their septic tanks. That practice could lead to a disastrous tourism nightmare like Boracay," Barbers said.

Boracay experienced a setback in tourist arrivals in 1999 when it was reported that its source of drinking water had been contaminated by coliform bacteria that exceeded allowable limits.

An investigation was conducted which led to the closure of the contaminated wells. It concluded that the inadequate septic and sewage treatment plants on the island were to blame.

Nowadays, the PTA checks up on the hotels and resorts possible source supply every other day to ensure presence of safe drinking water.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has threatened to cancel environmental compliance certificates and close establishments found to violate the DENR guidelines on proper septic tanks and connect them to the PTA sewage treatment plant.

Air Phil 5 triumphs, shares top

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RABUSA: New complainants, new evidence.

Graft raps filed vs Garcia budget officer

By Fe Zamora

THE OMBUDSMAN on Friday filed graft charges against former comptroller Isidro Rabusa in the Lt. Col. George Rabusa ransom case with his associates and wealth estimated to be P50 million.

An Ombudsman lawyer said Rabusa was not only responsible for six months, 3,000-plus pawnings ever being availed on by stars and properties, which include cash deposits with the Armed Forces and Police Savings and Loan Association (AFP-SLAI) and other banks, houses-to-lots, cars, motorcycles, boats and luxury vehicles.

The case against Rabusa was "officially requested" last Friday based on new evidence gathered, the lawyer who requested anonymity told the Inquirer.

The filing of new charges against Rabusa coincided with new Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Efren Abu's campaign to stamp out corruption in the military.

"Graft and corruption have no place in my ranks," Abu said in his address after taking over the post from Gen. Narciso Abaya, who retired Friday upon reaching the age of 56.

"There are non-complainants. In fact, there are two of them. And three is now evidence," the lawyer said.

Initial charges against the colonel were dropped by the Ombudsman in February last year for lack of sufficient evidence after the Rabusa couple produced documents explaining where their assets had come from.

Rabusa was the budget officer of former AFP comptroller Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia, who also faces a court-martial for charges of unexplained wealth estimated at P200 million.

Garcia was retired his charge down last the week, and was given until Wednesday to reply. He was also slapped with a six-month suspension starting Sept. 27.

Rabusa was relieved from his post as operations officer of the Central Command in Cebu two weeks ago to give him time to attend the House defense committee hearings on the case of Garcia.

But last Saturday, the AFP leadership placed him under house arrest.

Armed Forces spokesperson Maj. Gen. Edilberto Adtoa said Rabusa could move around only under guard and with the permission of Camp Aguinaldo commanders Brig. Gen. Alexander Aleo.

Matatag boys of PMA '71: The ruling class of AFP, PNP

A CLASS once downrollers, PMA Class '71 at the academy in Baguio, where he would wear young and carefree and every thing was either black or white.

Some of the Matatag is before now have come from the type that its members were not subjected to hazing rites they were plebes.

Unfair accusation

But Class 1971 member Rolando Mobido said the era's "erosion and unfair accusation" because only four Matatag members may have been involved in the torture of political detainees.

Another point of concern is that Senator Lacson and General Garcia had had no combat experience while three of their members died fighting in Mindanao a few years after graduation.

Lacson, also implicated in the Hacienda Binalbagan ambush, was the first in the class to become a general.

Personality cult

The class produced at least 45 generals—eight in the Army, 11 in the Air Force, three in the Navy and 23 in the PNP.

The Matatag may now be the "ruling class" of the AFP and PNP but, as McCoy pointed out and with the scandals involving Garcia and Mobilines, it has also become the symbol of what ails the military.

Aglipay, however, does not agree with McCoy's thesis that Matatag is ruled by the "cult of personality," particularly that of Honasan and Lonely Lacson.

Aglipay said the past and present reinforcement involving Matatag members were merely incidental.

"They made their own decisions and they are capable of defending themselves," he said.

He also said his friends were not ruthless but were independent-minded.

"It's the composition of the class that will explain why some of us were involved in various issues then," he said.

Where are they now?

Jeremiah Pamilar, who served as an assemblyman of Region 10 in the Marcos-era Batasang Pambansa, was the first Matatag member to enter politics.

Maximino Mejia, formerly of the Commonwealth, joined the foreign service and is now consul general in Los Angeles.

Nine others are in government service. Many are successful in civilian life. Mar Roxas under Ed. ser the "Pol" Kapunan, a former BMP leader and Honasan's best friend in the PMA, and seven ex-AFP brass members who became commercial pilots.

But a course closer to a top Matatag member and the mission in the PNP—who were not part of the R&R or the coup attempts that brought notoriety to Class 1971—had chosen even during their PMA days.

"They are not close like brothers," the source said, adding that there were at least three factions in the PNP alone, tied with Matatag.

The difference

McCoy avers that members of Class 1946, despite becoming one nation, abandoned the most part from political politics and the coup attempts in the 1960s, while members of Class 1971 were "willing" from time to time to use the military as a political instrument to achieve their ends.

He also draped with a six-month suspension starting Sept. 27.

Rabusa was relieved from his post as operations officer of the Central Command in Cebu two weeks ago to give him time to attend the House defense committee hearings on the case of Garcia.

But last Saturday, the AFP leadership placed him under house arrest.

Armed Forces spokesperson Maj. Gen. Edilberto Adtoa said Rabusa could move around only under guard and with the permission of Camp Aguinaldo commanders Brig. Gen. Alexander Aleo.

Army hospital chief sacked for using old medicines

Boquet also noted that the Department of National Defense was the agency responsible for the military's suppliers.

Ongoing due process

The relief and investigation of Ty was carried out on recommendation of the Army's Inspector General, Lt. Gen. Ismael Rafanan.

Quoting information from the Army Medical and Ty was relieved and investigated "for gross misconduct in relation to misappropriation of PHIC refunds, allegedly in the use of spurious OR's (official receipts) and willfully allowing utilization of expired medicines... [and] to determine his culpability and blames to or-

ganic in the entire military service."

"It's case to note with the Army's Officers and Supervision Board, which investigates allegations against individual Army men and finish down appropriate sanctions.

"There are allegations that are still under investigation. The process is ongoing and due process is being followed," Rafanan said.

If found liable, "he could face dishonorable discharge—meaning he would be separated from the service without his benefits.

5 complainants sanctioned

Panonal said that "for the benefit to function properly," Col. Reynaldo Bruno Lipol had been summarily relieved from.

According to Panonal, the Inspector General also imposed administrative sanctions on five civilian hospital personnel who had complained against Ty.

The five were relieved of their duties "to post the way for an impartial investigation while the inquiry is ongoing," he said.

Panonal said the sanctions were imposed because the complainants did not follow "the proper procedures.

"Even if the allegations are found to have been valid, they were moved [administrative sanctions] for not following the proper channels. So to make the hospital function continuously while the investigation is ongoing, the five were transferred out of the hospital," Panonal said.

He said the complainants should have gone through the army hierarchy instead of taking their complaint to the Office of the Secretary and the Office of the Chief of Staff.

Prosecute, not persecute

"To be continuing threat of violence in sending rid entire of members of the Philippine Army during the best, it all its personnel who willfully disregard the rule of law," Panonal said.

"A welcome step investigation on alleged corruption among its personnel. The Army, however, must also ensure that those who prosecute but not to persecute," he said. With a report from Ed Cabuenas, page A8

Corrections

IN THE Oct. 22 front page story "PMA alumni condemn graft in the military," the name of PMA alumni chairman Sid Montenegro was misspelled as Sid Domingo.

In the front page caption story on Thursday, Oct. 28, the name of Lt. Col. Romeo Tiongco was misspelled as Lt. Col. Romeo Tiongko.

Moldogo advances

DAVE Abel Moldogo downed Ildefonso Bonotillo, 15-3,15-5, and Jose Brico Gutierrez outplayed Rodolfo Aquart III, 15-8, 9-15, 15-12, yesterday to keep a undefeated showdown in the boys' singles 15-under division of the 2004 Tobi's Age Group Badminton Championships at the La Salle Greenhills PEAC gym.

In the boys' singles 10-under category, Kyle Jo Tan Ang proved the undefeated Adriano Pagsanjan, while Erwin Alfred Dollaso advanced against Dwyn Joy Dawal.

Runners in the girls' singles 10-under class were Mikayi Lazard, Jennifer Victorio, Brigid Ann Gutierrez, and Irene Angelangco.

Pharidan Aquilo advanced against Heidilene Berg Benavente.

In the girls' singles 15-under class, Bernadette Bagalangan, Rachel Gutierrez, Rona Gutierrez and Stella Santiago bagged into the semis.

Booking semifinal slots in the boys' 14-under division were Peter Gabriel Singzon, Ayriel Bilbad, Gerard Cabrera and Rodel Ferminiano while winners in the girls' division were Jaclyn Cortes, Jessica Dalura, Penny Cruz and Claudia Serrano.

Semifinalists in the 12-under were Luigi Buenaseda, Peter Magarse, Heinrich Bracelli II, Russ Ian Severo in the boys' division and Nino Jesus Funda, Francesca Gamboa, Hazel Ann Lincoln and Michelle Cruz in the girls' division. Winners on the 13-under division were Al Jerwel Chua, Jose Rizza Bryan Gocon, Erick Lucero, Elke Moya, Michelle Mercedes, Celine Castillo, Malvin Alcala and Regine de la Merced.

Fistorama on RPN 9

"SAMSUNG'S Fistorama" video features two action-filled hours as the 30-weight and super flyweight divisions. Former undefeated amateur Jeorge Solorio Lydo faces Wed Gallanosa in four rounds at 112 lb while Jonathan Lobo squares off with Chris Bajali in six rounds at 115 lb.

The bouts were held last week at the Joe Cuenada Boxing Arena in Taguig.

The boxing show is aired weekly in the United States, Europe, Australia, Japan, the Middle East and other parts of the world through ABS-CBN's Pinoy Central TV. It is shown at 2 p.m., Sundays, on RPN 9 and is supported by Samsung electronics Philippines, PCSO Shopwise and Teodoro Blum.

UNSEED'D Villanueva is seen fled Bull Basket's man-to-the-middle. Photo: courtesy

Villanueva relishes starting center role

By John Nevara

TAKING responsibility of Red Bull Barako's burden in the slot is nothing new for Enrico Villanueva.

During his collegiate days at the defunct, the talented Villanueva had unwarranted greater odds by leading Our Blue Eagles to a UAAP crown in 2002 while capturing the season-MVP positions.

So when Villanueva was accidentally shoved into the Barako's center role after starting rookie last year's PBA Rookie of the Year has drawn quite the task.

"There's a whole lot to adjust quickly and fill the spot that been to be filled. I was forced into this situation but I'm not complaining. I just take it as part of the challenge of my career," said the 24-year-old Villanueva.

After Gaston Fierp and Mick Pennisi got suspended by the PBA due to controversial problems, the Barako skated the slate thinning Orlando Rodriguez and Joey Sese to load up their aging frontline.

Still, marked the load of manning Red Bull Barako's game plan in the paint rests on 6'6 forward's shoulder. And he's been delivering so far.

Villanueva has been averaging 23.5 points and 12.5 rebounds the past five games, a gaudy leap from his 13.7 point output and seven boards per game when Herp and Pennisi were still around.

In a recent triple-overtime win against Sta. Lucia Realty to handed City Villanueva marked his way to a career-high 29 points and 16 rebounds against the Realtors' iconic tandem of Marlou Aquino and Dennis Espino.

Against Gin Kings' front-line night Villanueva finished with 18 points and nine rebounds against Dennis Rufino and Dennis Edralinda. Jun Magsanoc was, however, 0-1-12.

"I always see matching up against this big players of the other teams as an inconvenient for me. It's good for my career and I love to do it," said Villanueva.

"I'm looking at my third year before my career begins to reach its peak. But as things turned out, it might be earlier than expected," said Villanueva.

RP topples Hungary, lands 12th

Scores and standings

(PCB DIVISION 1 (9 holes)

Individual — Ramos, Alvin Patrick Acosta 33-6—39/36/36-3—42/36-6—36; Ramos, Jose A. Gomez 37-3—40/36-6—36/36-6—36; Balgos, Isaac A. Gomez 37-3—40/36-6—36/36-6—36; Philippine Navy Golf Association Pairs: Chua, Rizza Mangaoang-Americo Libunao, Dennis 37-3—40/36-6—36/36-6—36; Lopez, Angelo Joseph 33-6—39/36/36-3—42/36-6—36; Ramos, Alvin Patrick Acosta 33-6—39/36/36-3—42

GMA cites 10 top RP students

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo recently handed out awards to the year's Ten Outstanding Students of the Philippines at Malacañang's Ceremonial Hall.

The awards were the culmination of the rigorous annual search for the country's 10 top students who had distinguished themselves not only academically but for their leadership qualities, high moral virtues and deep commitment to community service undertaken by the JCI Philippines headed by its chair Jose S. Concepcion Jr. and JCI-Cebu president and CEO-Jose Concepcion III.

This year's awardees were Alexander Edward C. Dritan, cum laude, Medicine, University of the Philippines; Rockwell Ivey A. Bonzon, cum laude, Physical Therapy, Riverside College, Bacolod City; Mark Lester L. Abcarian, magna cum laude, Physics, University of the Philippines; Lee Isidro, Chan Jerie Kimbo G. Castillo, summa cum laude, Physics, Ateneo de Manila University; Primitivo Reyes Jr., summa cum laude, Biology, University of St. La Salle-Bacolod; Jennifer L. Dignum, magna cum laude, Electrical Engineering, Mindanao State University, Marawi City;

Karen Joy E Bonnevera, summa cum laude, Computer Science, De La Salle University; Ruth Jade M. Cardin, magna cum laude, Chemical Engineering, Technological Institute of the Philippines; Jennifer F. Teves, summa cum laude, Psychology, Assumption College; Jose L. Ilas Jr., magna cum laude, Business Administration, Ateneo de Naga University; and Leo Jaime R. Nicol, magna cum laude, Elementary Education, St. Paul University. Undersecretary Ricardo C. Saludo delivered the awardees' response.

The jaycees for FOOT search be partnership with a grant Dean Dr. Jose Rizal. "The youth is the hope of the future land."

JCI Philippines chair Jose Concepcion Jr. said the national hero's immortal words in form the seed from which grew the search for The Outstanding Students of the Philippines in 1961.

Other entries that support YOSP are the Communication Higher Education, the Rotary Club and National Bookstore.

THE COUNTRY'S top students received their trophies from President Arroyo (center). They are, from left, Lee Jaime Nicol, Charlotte Kendra Castillo, Ruth Jade Cardin, Alexander Edward Dritan, Karen Joy Bonnevera, Jennifer Teves, Jennifer Dignum, Mark Lester Abcarian, Primitivo Reyes Jr. and Jose Ilas Jr.

Opposition accepts reconciliation offer

ALMOST SIX months after the bitterly contested elections in May, the opposition has finally agreed to accept the offer of reconciliation extended by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Malacañang said yesterday the Presidents offer is reconcile with the opposition "had been 'positively received'" by Sen. Edgardo Angara and the Liberal Party.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye in an interview over DZRH said:

On Wednesday, Mr. Arroyo said: "I have invited Sen. Edgardo J. Angara and the political opposition headed by Mr. Lopez to join me in forging a covenant of national unity."

Bunye said Angara would consult his LDP members first before presenting the party's formal response to the President's offer.

The Bunye declined to comment when asked if Malacañang would offer opposition positions in the Cabinet and other government agencies to members of the opposition should they agree to accept his reconciliatory hand.

"This is for unity and principle and for us we cannot talk of the details because we have to wait for their party's official response," Bunye said.

The President made her peace offer to the peace directly after the opening hostilities between President Estrada-Dangcalan Jr. at special envoy and senate advisor on economic affairs and development Rodolfo Aguinaldo Del Oldal Sr., 187.

Dangcalan resigned from the President's Cabinet last June due to differences on foreign policy and reported that's candidacy in the May elections. Gil C. Cabunagan Jr.

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EMBARRASSED by BAD BREATH?

Passage of 'sin' taxes in the bag, says Palace

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG yesterday expressed confidence that the passage of the proposed higher taxes on cigarettes and alcohol products was in the bag although the Senate had hastily started deliberations on the revenue measures.

"Our tax reform package is moving forward with the assured passage of the so-called sin taxes," said Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye in a statement.

The House approved on Thursday a bill raising taxes on cigarettes and alcohol by 30 percent in 2005 and three percent annually in 2006 and 2007. But the Senate, which still needs to start its public hearing on the six taxes this week, has frowned on the House measure as being too low and is pushing for a more drastic hike in taxes on cigarettes and alcohol.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had met with the top executives of Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Senate President Franklin Drilon on Thursday night in her Palace office to discuss the proposed tax measures before the Senate.

Pimentel and Drilon are reportedly pushing for a 100-percent increase in the excise taxes on cigarettes and alcohol products.

Bunye said the President was confident that the Senate would pass the tax measures before the end of the year

RP grabs Hong Kong amateur title

HONG KONG—Jay Bayron shot a gutsy two-under par 69 to secure the victory for the Philippine team while firming up his bid for the individual crown after three rounds of play in the Squaremart Hong Kong Open Amateur and Mid-Amateur Golf Championships at the Hong Kong Golf Club's Old course in Sterling Saturday.

Bayron, now down Tommy Mansion in their head-to-head duel, closing out with a 10-36 card that proved enough to keep his overnight lead of three strokes heading in to the final round of the annual event, which makes a fourth in the 66-hole Hong Kong Open Championship slated June 16 to October.

Bayron's 69 likewise held off the charging Taiwanese squad in their bid to snatch the crown in the 54-hole team competition in the Filipinos, with Erwin Velasco completing the team with a 72, closed out with a 12-shot 54-hole total of 420.

Jay Bayron, winner of three titles back home, including the national championship, flourished with a 71 and didn't count in the three-to-play, two-to-count format event.

Taiwan, which started the round four shots behind the Filipinos, threatened to steal the thunder behind Shih Chang Chan, who started with a 66. But Shih failed to muster support from his teammates with 76-Ming Chen, who shot a 69 in the second round, bringed with a 73. Chin Cheng Shih didn't count with an 81.

Wahan, who also counted for the team in the first round, actually appeared head of for an emphatic day with a birdie-birdie opening but he lost his touch on the par-5 No. 6, where he made an 8 and after going out of bounds twice on his second shot.

After shooting a 66 in the second day, Bayron struggled from out to green all day, boiling out with a bogey on the 18th after landing deep in the trees on the second shot. He punched into the greenside bunker and muffled to six feet past the pin.

But Bayron, whose sure lever is sanctioned by the National Golf Association of the Philippines and backed by MOBP executive general John Lozada Fernandez, Malacañang and the Philippine Sports Commission, remained the most seasoned player in the room, matching Mansion's run under and after nine holes, then tracked to begin on the 15th after missed his running three-under card.

The old approach poorly from around 75 yards on the par-4 16th but pitched to gamely for a cap in birdie and settle.

That gave the former sudden champion a 54-hole aggregate of 206 as he kept his lead intact in the 66-hole individual championship, although this time over Shih, who had a 209.

Mansion fell a stroke further with a 213 after that 78 but remained a threat just the same with one round left in the event, where the winner will earn the right to play against the pros in the Hong Kong Open in Open.

Golden shines, ties Park at top

SPANISH golfer Sergio Garcia puts in the 17th hole during the second round during the Volvo Masters at the Valderrama Golf Club in San Roque, Spain. AP

Hot Aussie leads Sanya by 3 shots

Late rally gives Garcia cushion

Chut's makes Platinum Cup

Red Sox victory curses markets

Gabica rules 9-Ball tilt

Novak hurts Henman's Masters chances

NICOLAS Mavo celebrates his victory against Bohdan Ulihrach.

NBA PREVIEW

Pistons back and even better

ALBUM HILLS, Michigan—Chauncey Billups couldn't stop a grin from slowly spreading across his face.

Could the defending NBA champion Detroit Pistons be even better this season?

Yeahh.

With a nine-month, the Pistons made it look easy, stunning the basketball world by shooting off the stylized-and-out middled two Angeles Lakers to win it all in five games.

The Pistons may be in even better shape for a title run this season after a starting lineup that features five players in, or entering, the prime of their careers and a bench bolstered by seven offseason acquisitions.

"I'm excited," said Billups, the Finals MVP. "I'll take me chances."

Cutoffs

Detroit's Rasheed Wallace was the Pistons, now Detroit's persistent of basketball's operations, assembled a championship team with a bunch of cutoffs. Now, Detroit might have added another key piece that other teams didn't want.

After sending up him to watch Antonio McDyess play about 20 games around the end of last season for the Phoenix Suns, Dumars signed the former All-Star and Olympian to a $25-million, four-year deal to take the spot of Mehmet Okur, who signed a free agent deal with Utah.

The power forward has averaged 18.7 points, 8.3 rebounds and 1.6 blocks during his eight-year career but has been plagued by injuries the past three seasons.

"McDyess dropping double-doubles or points like Dyess broke fluidity.

Good addition

"Dyess looks like the old Dyess to me," forward Rasheed Wallace said. "He looks like a good addition."

Though career free throw-and coach Larry Brown, Dyess added up with championship to look forward for the first time, they see his approaching the challenge of winning a title against the pains-way.

"They are it's hard to repeat, but I think the first one is toughest," said Wallace, a two-time All-Star and Defensive Player of the Year.

Indeed, Detroit's performances made, a one of many who are expecting a harder day winning a championship the first time.

"We can't get complacent and we can't forget now we won the first one by playing together," Brown said. "I think a second championship is more difficult because everybody is going to be shooting at us."

Starters back

Detroit's entire starting lineup of players from the championship team—Rip Hamilton, Billups, Richard Hamilton, Rasheed Wallace and Tayshaun Prince.

The Pistons lost three top reserves—Okur, Corliss Williamson and Mike James—including James, Derrick Coleman, Carlos Arroyo and Ronald Dupree. They also re-signed reserves Lindsey Hunter and Derrick Wilt, and brought back Elden Campbell.

With such a stacked lineup, Darko Milicic likely will spend another season watching from the bench. Just as the Pistons figured he would, Milicic they drafted him No. 2 overall in 2003.

"We're deep, talented and big," Dumars said. "We have experience and we're battle-tested. There are times in the season when we're going to be injured, sick or unsatisfied."

Brown will help make sure of that.

Slugger

The Hall of Fame coach Hilicic said he his excited with his first with this last season, but he's drilling the players just as hard as he did a year ago. Many of his practices during training camp stretched to three hours and included the dreaded conditioning drills Brown is known for, and even pre-season games made him grumpy.

"I haven't been real happy," Brown said. "We've been real careless in practice and sloppy in games."

Soon after hearing this talent, the Pistons said they would not have seen the title without Rasheed Wallace.

He was acquired, with an expiring contract, from Atlanta in a three-team deal and Detroit the trading deadline for reserves and was his. I ticks, adding what one Pistons manager is looked, another option on offense and made a great defense, one of the best in league history.

League records

The Pistons made an signing Rasheed Wallace their top priority and they did with a $37-million, five-year contract.

The Pistons are convinced they will be even better overall this season, especially on defense—when it might be tough to improve. Last season, Detroit and San Antonio allowed 84.5 points per game, the third-lowest scoring average since the league began using a shot clock during the 1954-55 season.

The Pistons are league favorites by holding 11 opponents—including five struggles—under 75 points, and 26 straight opponents to less than 100.

"I think we're a lot more athletic and bigger than we were last year and that should make us a better defensive team," Billups said. AP

Center of the Atlanta Hawks' Boris Diaw is a preseason addition to the Phoenix Suns' roster.

Spurs net preseason win vs Hornets; Sonics score

SAN ANTONIO—Tim Duncan scored 17 points to lead the San Antonio Spurs over the New Orleans Hornets, 110-86, Friday.

Tony Parker added 16 points for the Spurs, and Bowen scored 15 points for the Hornets.

Barry rules left Avande as a free agent after last season, was 5-of-6 from the field and 4-of-5 from 3-point range. Reserve Tony Massenburg scored 12 points in 14 minutes.

Baron Davis and Jon Barry (11) were 20 points, and Chris Andersen had nine rebounds in 20 minutes.

In Toronto, Vince Carter scored 20 points in Toronto beat Cleveland, 100-92.

Rookie Trenton had 16 points and 11 rebounds for the Cavaliers (0-2).

Garret missed Toronto's one previous preseason game to deal with a bruised thigh he suffered against. Carter is expected to return to Columbia, South Carolina, for the wild on Monday but will be limited to single rebounds. Quentin Richardson made the 3-pointers and scored 16 points. Steve Nash added 11 points and eight assists.

Peja Stojakovic hit his 3-pointers and scored 21 points for the Kings.

Jason Kapono scored 20 points, including a telescoping 3-pointer with 29.6 seconds left, as Seattle edged Portland, 91-87.

Allen, who missed the previous two games with a sore back, scored 17 points in the fourth quarter and had eight of Seattle's last nine. AP

SLOPPY plays rustle as Glen Sandale by Rasheed Wallace against Minnesota's Kirk Johnson makes Detroit coach Larry Brown fear winning a second title will be difficult.

national finals

Parker Spurs of Montgomery of and Dino the 8-ng to Bangkok.

be backed by Philippine in the drill. as the official Bandido as the Philippine

Former Baltimore, led by rookie ball standout Hassan Ca, led Group B with a 3-0 record, sending as was just one of two members of the second-day official to make it to the finals.

Dambita a 2-0 at presidior after wins over Dan Amanio and Greco, rout. Former national squad player Manny Yan leads Calamba.

field a team for the locker doubles Reynaldo Manuel and Rodolfo Ace finished their stint in the time round with a 13-3, 21-8 victory over Chua Yu and Francis Eje.

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Dambita a 2-0 at presidior after wins over Dan Amanio and Greco, rout. Former national squad player Manny Yan leads Calamba.

n Agassi undergo a forehand return on Fernando other quarterfinal match of the Stockholm Open

Jazz give Kirilenko richest contract

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah—The Utah Jazz said Friday they had agreed on a multi-year extension with All-Star forward Andrei Kirilenko to be responsible for the most lucrative in the National Basketball Association club's history.

The Jazz did not disclose financial terms. But news reports said Kirilenko would sign a four-month contract of six years for $86 million.

ESPN and the Salt Lake Tribune al. so reported the Jazz would likely do for some of the money beyond the season ends of the deal. Under the NBA's collective bargaining agreement, up to 30 percent of a player's compensation can be deferred.

"Andrei is not only our league-talented player, he brings toughness and leadership to the team," Jazz president Dennis Kucinich said. "We are enormously fortunate to have signed this cornerstone."

With the departure of former Utah all-Stamers John Stockton and Karl Malone, Kirilenko became the team's top his own last season when he averaged 15.3 points and 8.1 rebounds in 78 games.

Somewhat the bench: Kirilenko, 23, has garnered the reputation as one of the fast-rising players in the league. In his second year in the league, he increased his scoring and rebounding average in each of the last three seasons.

He has career averages of 13.0 points and 6.7 rebounds in 240 games and said the area looking for ward to be for him in Utah.

"We have a young, potentially great team...and a legendary coach (Jerry Sloan)," Kirilenko said. "We have a great franchise and it's a great place for me to build a career that can culminate the time four years in the league." AP

MINE EMINE: Bruce Bro boards

Agassi marches to Stockholm final 4

STOCKHOLM—Top seed Andre Agassi marched into the Stockholm Open semifinals on Friday, beating Spanish eighth seed Fernando Verdasco 6-3, 6-4 in the last-three rounds of the two tournaments.

Second seed Joachim Johansson, however, crashed with a loss from his quarterfinal against his Swedish countryman Mikael Tillstrom.

Johansson won the first set, 6-3, but withdrew when Tillstrom broke him in 5-3 in the second.

Verdasco, introduced by the crowd's support for the fallen star, looked overpowered in the opening set as both dominated with their service.

"He's tough for anyone to play," said Agassi.

The left-handed made a very big serve. It's a difficult serve to read and to return and then he has a very big forehand, so if you give it to play and you give him the chance to use the forehand, the points is finished." Verdasco specializing in the serve-and-volley to fight off one break point on the way to the crossed but failed to execute his excellence as Agassi broke him to be tied-ends at 5-4 before serving out.

"It is unfortunate that I got a little unlucky / started to get more touch to and to play more from the baseline and I felt very comfortable there.

"I played a good few games to break him, and then once I was in the lead I think it was a big difference." The last Vegas star faces fourth-seed Tommy Haas, who defeated Bulgaria Dimitar Kutrovsky, 6-3, 7-6. Both Haas and Agassi have yet to lose a set.

"We played twice this summer, back-to-back, in Los Angeles and in Canada in Toronto, one and once, we played three sets back-to-back. So it's always a difficult match," said Agassi of Kutrovsky's further world No. 2.

"Tommy is an exceptional one of the best players in the world, he should be up on the way."

Tommy has another Swede in the semis, Bjorkman faces 2002 semifinal Open champion Thomas Johansson, who overcame a knee injury to beat Romanian third seed Andrei Pavel, 7-6, 7-5.

Quezon keeps URBL semis hopes burning

SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga—The Quezon Province Bankers held another down the stretch to defeat home crowd favorite Basa-Luzon Pampanga, 103-94, yesterday to keep their semifinal hopes alive in the United Basketball Republic League (URBL) at the University of the Assumption here.

It was the highest-scoring game so far in the league. Now enjoying a two-game lead over Basa-Luzon, Quezon's Jeff Chandler poured in 21 points, including four triples, delivered the crucial game in the Gladiators were joined the Quezon Bankers Jeff Sanders and Lamberto

Basa-Luzon Center absorbed by several straight setback but remained in sole second spot with a 4-3 card behind undefeated M. Llanillo Cebu City (7-0).

Exhausted his share of those trophies in the thirty period as the Bankers pulled away 61-71, the with land cheers from the jam packed crowd, Basa-Luzon Center Reggie Sash behind Marvin Ventura and Pet Deyng to threaten at 83-84 with 5:36 left.

Ago Bitoon had a stellar debut in the league-backed by Lamberto and scrabble as he represents Basa-Luzon Center with 23, but was limited to only seven in the second half due to early foul trouble.

After their challenges losses, URBL action continues on time 5 with Lamberto Cebu Province (2-5) fighting for survival against the Cebuano in Bago, Cebu.

MILF says it's all for peace

COTABATO CITY—Moslem separatist rebels said Saturday they were determined to peacefully resolve their three-decade conflict in the southern Philippines.

Mohaqher Iqbal, chief peace negotiator for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, said rebel leaders assured members of an international ceasefire monitoring group that they would pursue peace talks with the Philippine government "until a just, comprehensive and honorable peace settlement is achieved."

The pledge was made during a meeting with Malaysian and Brunnian ceasefire monitors at a guerrilla camp.

"Our leaders reassured those the MILF is determined to achieve peace in Mindanao," rebel spokesperson Eid Kabalu told reporters.

The meeting reinforced the foundation of the peace process in the region."

The ceasefire monitoring team is composed of 14 soldiers from Brunei and 30 from Malaysia.

The monitors will be deployed to the southern cities of Iligan, Davao and Cotabato, and will fan out to parts of any encounters between guerrillas and government troops.

Cebu Lobregat, the mayor of Zamboanga City, where the monitors were also to be deployed, has refused to host them. He said he feared their presence would cause rebels to enter the bustling port city.

The ceasefire, which has been in effect for more than a year, is crucial to upcoming Malaysian-brokered peace talks. Formal negotiations are expected to resume next month after the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The rebels have condemned terrorism, denied any links to Jemaah Islamiyah, and offered one of spection by the rebels their camps for in tary. AP

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The WORLD

Lito Lorenzo B. Suico

EU leaders sign historic new charter

ROME—EU leaders Friday signed a historic constitution for the expanding bloc in a familiar ceremony on the spot where the EU's forerunner was born, although doubts remain over whether it will ever come into force.

The Rome event was also loaded by a new vote the EU's governing executive Commission, which was withdrawn at the last minute this week, looking to Europe's future as the result of a crowded summit deadline.

The assembled leaders were urged to press ahead speedily with ratifying the constitution, which must pass referenda in at least 10 EU countries over the next two years to enter into force.

"Your decisions we cannot take for granted," said outgoing European Commission chief Romano Prodi.

"The constitution that we are signing today will therefore need to be backed up by a continually renewed commitment on the part of both citizens and governments," added Italy's Silvio Berlusconi, hosting the event.

The ceremony took place in the ornate Orazi and Curiazi hall, where the Rome Treaty which established the European Economic Community—the EU's predecessor—was launched by six countries on March 25, 1957.

The Constitution, agreed in June after two years of haggling, aims to streamline EU institutions and prevent decision-making gridlock in a bloc which grew from 15 to 25 members this year, with several more waiting in line.

It notably increases the power of the EU presidency to replace the current six-month rotating chairmanship with a new post of EU foreign minister.

Italian President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi hailed the new treaties as "a turning point in the history of humanity."

"The act which you signed today dismisses as definitely from their domain of logic, intolerance, war, the specters of the 1930s still no longer haunt the souls of future generations," he said, referring to the rise of Nazi Germany.

But the historic document has still to be ratified by all 25 EU members. Six states to come into force. The trouble is, at least one or two "no" votes are feared in the referenda to be held over the next 48 months.

Analysts say the scale of the political problem will depend on the number of no votes and, inevitably, where they come. If Blair delivers to Britain, for example would half talk about withdrawing some concessions, a negative result in France could lead to a full-blown EU crisis a year explosion.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said Friday that Britain was likely to hold its referendum on the EU constitution early in 2006. Blair made no public comment on hopes, leaving shortly after the end of the ceremony. AFP

Arafat tested for leukemia

CLAMART, France—Yasser Arafat was set to undergo a battery of medical tests on Saturday in French doctors to investigate whether the ailing Palestinian leader is suffering from leukemia or some other blood disorder.

Palestinian officials said Arafat was moved by van in a serious condition but there was no immediate risk of his dying.

Arafat was transported into a French military hospital in the Paris suburb of Clamart on Friday, after arriving by helicopter at the end of a gruelling six-hour journey from his desert-besieged compound in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

The Palestinian president, effectively confined to his offices by Israeli forces for the last 2½ years, was ordered to fly to France after he had promised to allow him to return to the West Bank following medical care.

Aides said the 75-year-old would undergo several days of tests into his abnormally low count of blood platelets, a condition that can be caused by leukemia.

A senior Palestinian official said on Saturday morning that doctors who have treated Arafat spoken to the media...had carried out a body and brain scan that showed up nothing and that they would start a series of blood tests on Saturday. Reuters

GAIN CHAPTER IN INDIA REMEMBERED
Pictures taken Nov. 1, 1984, show India's then Premier Rajiv Gandhi (second, left), accompanied by his sons Sonia (third, left) and his daughter Priyanka (center) looking over the cremation pyre of his mother Indira Gandhi, in New Delhi. Oct. 31 marks the 20th anniversary of Mrs. Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh bodyguards, her murder after she ordered troops into the Golden Temple in Amritsar to flush out Sikh militants fighting for an independent state. AFP

Boy rescued from Japan quake rubble seeks mother

TOKYO—A 2-year-old boy who was rescued from a crushed car after almost three days said also about his mother who was buried beneath a week after a major earthquake struck Japan, doctors said.

Yuki Maruyama, who spent five nights trapped in a white minivan under the rubble of a landslide before being pulled out Wednesday, seems to have clear memories her mother, hairdresser Emi, hospital staff said.

Doctors said the boy, who has come to symbolize the human suffering of the earthquake, is taking in-hour rehearsing to sleep just in his bed. He appeared unaware that his mother and 3-year-old sister died while him in the car.

He has been reportedly asking hospital staff when he can see his mother and inquired from the "Did my mom die in the hospital?"

Officials at Niigata-Red Cross Hospital would not say whether the news has been broken to him.

Whenyukiyasu asked Emi what he drank while he was trapped, he said only, Tokoshi milk."

"I didn't know what to do because the car broke. Please fix it," the boy was quoted as saying.

Rescuers believe the boy survived by sucking condensation that ran on a spare lid on wide and one metal bolt.

Nearly 40 of measures guilt and favorites in the town of Ende to pay last respects to the 39 years old teacher Takako Shimoyama, according to a report on the graveyard past black-clad women holding pictures of the girl, whose body remains nudged on the result of the car. AFP

Hundreds to be charged over Muslim deaths, says Thai PM

BANGKOK—Hundreds of Muslims will be prosecuted over a demonstration that led to the deaths of 87 people in southern Thailand last week, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra said today, in a move which could further stoke tensions in the region.

"I have received a report from General Sanchai Tantrasiri, head of the Southern Provinces Peacekeeping Command, that 300 of the detainees will be prosecuted," Thaksin told a televised news conference.

They will face charges including destruction of government property, staging a riot, and robbery, he also said.

Local television showed the first of some 900 detainees, wearing orange shirts and blue T-shirts, being freed and receiving 200 baht (US$5.1, Thaksin said said the detainees would receive money and clothing "since their shirts were stripped off during the incident."

At least two of the freed men had received their T-shirts once they boarded a bus, television pictures showed.

Faced with mounting domestic and international concern over the way security forces handled the incident, Thaksin on Friday night announced an independent inquiry into the deaths.

"I will set up an independent commission headed by Pichai Ratakonpaisit, ex-Ombudsman, and comprised of legal and Muslim experts and experts on security, to investigate the current and last information," a cabinet meeting Thaksin said in a nationally televised address.

Thaksin did not say when the investigation will begin, or what time frame it has to complete its work.

Thai media quoting sources had estimated from the outset, reported that the number of the bodies that died during the decision-making will be far greater than the 78 reported by the government of the Buddhist-majority kingdom.

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US could rethink Electoral College system

By Mark Sherman

US President George W. Bush (right), joined by California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, waves to the crowd at a campaign rally in Nicholasville, Arana Oct. 29, in Columbus, Ohio. AP

WASHINGTON—It could happen again. One candidate captures the popular vote, but his opponent wins the presidency in the Electoral College.

Such a replay of the 2000 election's controversy of Tuesday's balloting that many Americans find. It also could be the one that would drive the nation to re-evaluate the future of the Electoral College, the system that actually decides the presidential election in the United States.

Under the Electoral College system, each of the 50 states gets two electoral votes—plus one for each congressional district in that state. Whichever candidate carries a majority in each state's electoral votes...emerge as two votes, Nebraska and Maine, which split their electoral votes, including two to the candidate who wins the popular vote across the state and one to the popular vote winner in each congressional district.

It takes a majority or 270 of 538 electoral votes, to win the presidency.

In 2000, Vice President Al Gore won a total of 50,999,897 votes, or 48.4 percent, compared George W. Bush, But Bush nevertheless became president by virtue of getting a majority in electoral votes.

Proposals of changing the way the United States elects its presidents are another issue that could help build support to change the system, particularly if the parties' vote were reversed.

This year, the possibility exists that Bush could be denied a second term despite winning the popular vote if Democrat John Kerry were to come up with enough narrow wins in battleground states, proponents of change in both parties said.

"That might cause Republicans to reconsider in just as there was Democratic angst in the last election," said Republican Congressman Jim Leach of Iowa, a longtime supporter of an election by popular vote.

Oh, as Rep. Gene Green, a Texas Democrat, said: "That would be like losing the shoe on the other foot."

Called outdated and antiquated by its critics, the Electoral College has endured despite efforts from its foes to which candidates have become president, despite finishing second in the popular vote.

Most polls find majorities favor getting rid of it. "People think of it as somewhere between bad and stupid," said Harvard University professor Alexander Keyssar. "But that's been true for 50 years."

Because it is embedded in the Constitution, the Electoral College could be abolished only by changing it constitutional amendment—and more than 700 attempts have failed. Amending the nation's basic law requires a two-thirds vote in both houses of Congress and ratification by 38 states—an epic feat, especially because the Electoral College gives small states disproportionate influence. Some have a minimum of three electoral votes, no matter their size, as does the District of Columbia.

Defenders of the college say the protection of small states is a good reason to keep it. Supporters say the Electoral College favors rural and small states because of small states, and candidates would campaign exclusively in states with large populations, where votes tend to count for more of small states.

"The Electoral College embodies two kinds of principles in electing a president: proportionality based on population and equality of states," said Akhil Amar, director of Yale Human Rights Initiative's Center for Representative Government.

Proposals to change the process generally fall into three categories:

• Abolish the Electoral College and institute direct elections of the president, and hope requiring that winners to gain 40 percent of the vote to avoid a runoff.

• Keep the college, but have states abandon the winner-take-all formula and allot electoral votes proportionally, as is under consideration in Colorado this year.

• Give the automatic winners two electoral votes and award one vote to the winner of each congressional district, the system used in Maine and Nebraska.

• Have an electoral vote between the winners of the nationwide popular vote, which would eliminate most split decisions.

Leach said the argument against the Electoral College is plain: "We're acknowledging democracy around the world, we are suggesting to anyone they have modernized college?" AP

Japan in confusion over fate of hostage

SHOCKED Kids in a darkroll photo. AP

TOKYO—Japan was thrown into confusion Saturday over the fate of a 18-year-old hostage threatened with execution as Iraqi militants held to discovered in an insurgent-torn town threatened to be without people.

The city began with a new democratic government called by the former emissary which said US troops found a body north of Baghdad resembling Nosair Kada, a Japanese citizen abducted by Islamic militants linked to al-Qaida.

But when Ely Karmi flew the body to Jordan for analysis of the Japanese Embassy there found that the height, head and dental structure did not match those of Kada, top Japanese government spokesperson Hiroshi Hosoda said.

The unidentified officers at the embassy in Kuwait examined the body and they concluded that it is not likely that it is the remains of Mr. Kada," said Hosoda, the chief cabinet secretary.

"We deem uncertain is completely different," Hosoda said.

It was not immediately clear who the body belonged to or whether it would be found back to Iraq.

Kada, who had reportedly gone to Iraq as a tourist and was declared alive last week to the deadline set by militants from Iraq by Gen Thursday, remained confined to Tokyo.

Japan has about 500 troops stationed in Iraq on a humanitarian mission. It is Japan's first military deployment since World War II to a zone of active fighting.

But Japan officials have had a limited number of personnel in Iraq, particularly after the taking of five Japanese hostages in April, who were released, and the killings of two Japanese diplomats on an ambush last year.

During the latest hostage crisis, Japan has been dependent on the United States and its allies and on the Iraqi interim government, to which Tokyo sent troops.

A press report from Iraq said that at the deadline for Kada's execution passed, and the body of an Asian-looking man was found on the southern city of Tikrit.

But the body was of a man's dress up with a large build, dark skin and black mustache, and Daiwad al-Tikrit of Tikrit general hospital.

Kada's mother, Chieko, who had pleaded to Islamic militants on Saturday to release her son, said she could not bear to be killed after being informed of developments by government officials, Japanese media said quoting relatives. AFP

Cambodians warmly embrace their new king

PHNOM PENH — Cambodians warmly embraced their little-known new monarch King Norodom Sihamoni Saturday, impressed by his graceful bearing and gentle speech as his ornate three-day coronation drew to an end.

The 51-year-old king was formally crowned Friday in an elaborate and solemn ceremony in his first address to the nation featuring he promised to share his countrymen's "happiness and sadness forever."

Prok Sokhoeun, a pickle-seller doing a roaring trade from the thousands attending the events at the park outside the sprawling palace's gates, gushed over the youthful-looking King Sihamoni.

"His voice is very sweet and he is also very handsome. He is a good person, very gentle and suitable for the position," she said.

The new monarch, an unmarried former ballet dancer and cultural diplomat who has spent most of his life outside Cambodia, is keenly known by his 13 million subjects.

But his glamorous appointment as king has excited many.

Ngoum Phanhdeg, an 13-year-old mountain scavenger said he originally planned to come here Saturday only to collect the rubbish the crowd left behind.

"I didn't plan to see him at all but I have seen him now and I am very happy that I did because he is the king!" he said.

"I don't know if he will rule well but I believe in him because he looks very gentle and kind. I hope that he will take care of the lives of children like us."

Cambodia's kings were once all-powerful but today the position is largely symbolic. Yet the monarchy remains highly respected and King Sihamoni's father Norodom Sihanouk styled himself as a protector of the country's vulnerable.

Kim Seong, an orange-robed Buddhist monk observing the spectacle, said he was optimistic about the new king's abilities.

"His outside appearance is very good. His face is full of the true virtues of a good natured man: compassion, pity, joy or others' happiness and generosity," the 28-year-old said.

While Cambodia's older citizens, particularly in rural areas, still regard the king as semi-divine, King Sihamoni faces a tougher challenge winning over the young. Many are more concerned with economic survival in his war-scarred nation than the monarchy.

But university students hoping him speak gave him the thumbs-up.

"I am optimistic about his reign," said agricultural student Hem Lina, 23.

"The gentle look on his face, his respectful speech he gives, all of that helps me to believe more in him... I will work and see what happens next but what I can confirm now is mine, I and my friends have found our trust in him." AFP

KING Norodom Sihamoni releases a white pigeon toward the end of the coronation ceremony AFP

Coseteng firms up bold of lead

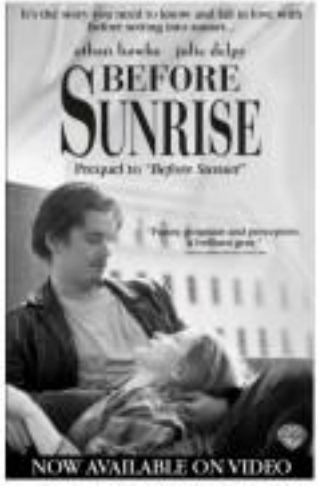
THIRTEEN Sueng Xuereb star driver Jody Coseteng strengthened his hold on the lead of the premier PG division after the 12th and 13th rounds of the Philippine National Touring Car Championships at the Batangas Racing Circuit in Balimbing, Batangas.

Coseteng, a four-time Driver of the Year, scored two runner-up finishes to pull away from his close pursuers Dominic Ilem and Boy Bayot in the race for the championship's $1 crown.

He entered 24 points after the two races to boost his total to 115 points, 19 ahead of second-leading Ilem (101) and 31 up on Bayot (100). Coseteng, who had the fastest lap time of 1:48.501 in the 40th lap of the final heat, clocked 29:09.378 after 12 laps.

Coseteng said he is eyeing his best for the last in the 12th and 14th rounds in December. "I want to end my campaign on a winning note," said Coseteng.

COSETENG



Mike Arroyo's support sought for Gerry fight

By Sabrina L. Laguesma

ORLANDOSO of Gerry Peñalosa's fight for the WBF crown are seeking the support of First Gentleman Mike Arroyo.

The 33-year-old Peñalosa puts for the vacant World Boxing Federation superfly title when he takes on undefeated Thai Bangsaen Mahaparan on Nov. 27 at the Cuneta Pilipinas Coliseum.

Promoter Gabriel "Bebot" Elorde Jr., son of the legendary Flash Elorde, said Filipinos should rally behind this lucrative sporting event.

"Bangsan talaga mata ang support ng mga Cebuano, alam ko madapat at gusto niya ang laban, eg, at nandoon ako sa isa ako nung laban ni Pacquiao sa Laoag," Elorde said.

The undercard of the event, for the benefit of St. Jude Orphanage, will also feature three WBF International bouts.

The southpaw Peñalosa (47-9-2, 32 KOs), a bet on the comeback trail and has indicated that, should he win the WBF crown, his next move would be to call out the reigning champion of the WBC, WBA, IBF and WBO for a planned unification bout.

Lone Pinoyboks, chair of the World Boxing Organization Asia-Pacific, had earlier hinted that should Peñalosa win the WBF crown on Nov. 27, he would try to arrange a possible confrontation with Venezuelan ex-gamboa champ Jurmanbol Vargas, which Peñalosa had knocked out in their first encounters.

San Andres competes in Macau event today

XENTEE standout Giles Ronnel's San Andres faces the biggest challenge yet of his colorful career when he pits guts and skills with Asia's best in the centerpiece Grupo 125cc category of the FIM Asia Motocross Championship in Macau, China, today.

San Andres is dipping his toe in the Pro Open category for the first time in the 4-Hitmotocross festival against the region's greatest riders at that, but he's fine and ready, his 4yo Andres says his son welcomes the challenge.

"I was amazed because he is over-excited about his golden chance. Gusto nalagot niya," said Ana-Dan. "He probably realizes that this is his best opportunity to hone his talents to the fullest. If he wants to be the best, he has to ride with the best."

The 16-year-old, includes SEC Asia-Pacific defending champion Hans Aguilar and Steven Axmilod Sabio Aguilar—San Andres' teammates, who will be with him joining their talent with the world's top riders from China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, India, Mongolia, Guam and the USA.

SAN ANDRES

The three Cebu representatives were chosen by the National Motorcycle Sports and Safety Association (Nomsa) on the strength of their showing in the Camel Supercross, helping the event to Macau is Jerrick Mora, also of Xentee.

Aside from Aguilar and Dale Cruz, San Andres, who is backed by BS Motorcycle Shop, SEC, Oakley, KDC Helmet, Skrebel, Sox, UPG and Suzuki Motorcycles, also has to contend with current FIM leader Tadatsuke Hotsuka of Japan and Ajo Gadang of Indonesia.

San Andres has stayed fit and sharp for the coming Macau race not just through practice but to annual competitions locally.

FORMULA TOYOTA CHAMP: Edgenport driver Ivan Carapian, driving for Ranjo Shipping, MCP Sugawa Bayawa, Sweater Liner and Cola Cola, scored another victory last weekend at the Batangas Racing Circuit to snag the 2004 Formula Toyota Series championship, the penultimate leg of the 2004 PCSO Grand Prix.

Bukidnon ends football fiesta with 'Danny Cup'

THE BUKIDNON Football Association (BUFA) recently ended its first Athletic Football Fiesta by staging a two-day football festival named after Danny Mosca, president of the Bukidnon Sidelights.

The "Danny Cup" was a culmination event staged at the Philips pitch in Del Monte Plantation, Bukidnon.

Champions in various age levels and top football officials gathered at the 4-a-year old's Plantation Elementary School (9-10), Camp 14 FC (11-12) and Lantex SC Cantilan United (13-14 years old).

The event was organized by BUFA, headed by Mon Monteros, and was supported by Mayor Lawrence Senior Virlor Medranas operations of Del Monte Philippines.

The first Athletic football fiesta in the officials' Visayas 14" tournament of the Philippine Football Federation.

PAGUNSAN: Brilliant recovery from double-bogey 6 on 12th hole

Juvic shoots 70, but RP slips in World Amateur

JUVIC Pagunsan bordied back from a double bogey six on No. 13 yesterday to shoot one-under 70, but he did not get enough help as the Philippines slipped into a tie for 25th place in the World Amateur Golf championships.

The long-hitting ace actually dropped four strokes in a three-hole span at Rio Hondo Golf Course in San Gonzalo, Puerto Rico, with bogeys sandwiching that double at he finished out with a 37 after a 33 in his first nine.

Antonio Marabiani and Michael Hiba both struggled with 78s, and the Philippines, from one-under at the start of the round and an 18th place tie, is now at three-over 291 and way out of the pace still being set by the United States.

The Americans, who are looking to win the Eisenhower Trophy for the third straight year, got a 67 from Ryan Moore and a 69 from Spencer Levenon's 208 aggregate, 20-under and eight strokes ahead of second placed Spain.

Wales, Switzerland and Sweden are tied for third spot with nine-under cards, and from the way things stand and with the support crew not responding for Pagunsan, a repeat of a best-ever third place finish seems out of sight for the Philippines.

Pagunsan, a member of that record-setting team in Malaysia in 2002, birdied Nos. 2, 4, 7, and 8 in the front nine after, getting back a stroke on the third. He got back to four under with an-other birdie on 11 before that fateful stretch.

The Cantilenga ace in the PAL Invitational has a five-under total, the bulk of his score coming on the par-5s, all of which he birdied yesterday and three of the four in the first round.

Hirakawa had two birdies, two doubles and three bogeys, while Hiba, who won the Singapore Amateur last month, had a 42 in his final nine holes after a bogey on 36, a double on 37 and a triple bogey 8 on No. 11.

Manong R. Carillo

Korean lady tandem rules Sherwood Chairman's Cup

LEDY golfers Sung Mee Lee and Kyung Suk scored a combined 140 points to win the third Chairman's Cup at the plush Sherwood Hills Golf and Country Club in Trece Martires, Cavite.

That 140 via the 2-man team aggregate scoring format gave Lee (69) and Suk (71) the overall championship in the one-day tournament sponsored by Globe Platinum, Globe Inc., Information Professionals Inc., and MEC Bus Co.

Lee and Suk received their championship trophy from club chair Robert John Sobrepeña.

Asia Pacific Golf Corp., Club Lemery, Copperstone, Camera Clubmakers, Federal Motor-sponsored, Hotel Regency Manila, Ivana Phils., Industrial Water Systems, Kia Motors, Surk Inc., Pfizer and Petrolago Tire were the other sponsors.

Shin Young King and Sook Ja Han came up with 78 and 68, respectively for 146 points to beat six roundtrack the team of Nini Sarmiento and Arlene Dizon in Division 1.

Andy Wenkin and Jimmy Adaro collected 148 points (72-76) to capture the Division 2 honors. Jesús Sison and Irene Flores was second with 163 (74-89).

SOBREPEÑA

Dragon rowers capture 2 golds

MAANSHAN, China —The Philippine dragon boat racing team capped its two-week Chinese tour recently capturing two gold and one silver medals in the two-day 3rd Asian championships which ended Thursday.

The Filipinos raked the 250-meter and 500-m races, both times at the expense of the powerful Guangdong, China squad, to maintain their spectacular winning run in international competitions.

The Filipinos clocked 48.34 seconds in the 250 and one minute 34.44 seconds in the 500.

The Chinese took the silver with times of 48.72 seconds and 1:36.77. Hanoi team Interlude was third in the 250 in 53.06 seconds, while Macau grabbed the bronze in the 500 in 1:41.34.

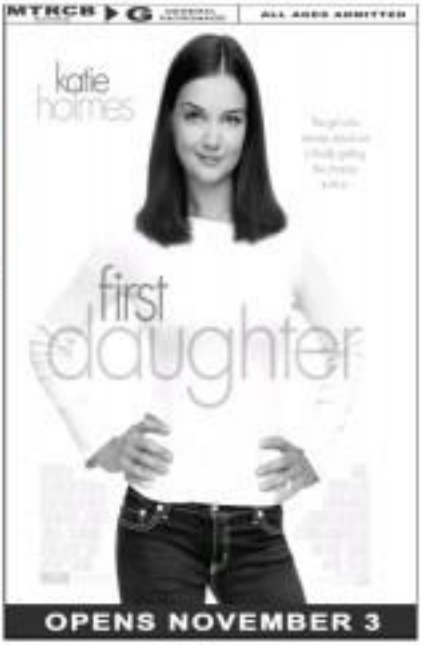
The Chinese avenged their ouster by beating the Filipinos in the 1000-m race. The Guangdong rowers capsized on the marching row protests, a shift the Chinese paddlers retained, to win in 3 minutes 21.12 seconds.

The Filipinos took the silver in 3:20.21, while the Aussies settled for the bronze in 3:32.93.

Other countries which competed in the Asian event were Hong Kong, Malaysia, Japan and Chinese Taipei.

The Filipinos became instant celebrities here when their feats were featured in the front pages of local dailies.

"It was a big reward for their hard work," said RP coach Isidro Bagas of his team's first showing.



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Her father's daughter

ILOCOS Norte Rep. Imee Marcos has cut a high profile in the ongoing congressional inquiry into the alleged corruption in the Armed Forces of the Philippines. She tangled with the always-easy-listener Secretary Angelo Reyes over his mother's tax returns. She barnstormed another former AFP chief of staff, Diomedio Villanueva, about his willingness to disclose his Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

EDITORIAL When Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia was a no-show at the first hearing, the threatened (a week ahead of Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago) to block the confirmations of offending military officials at the Commission on Appointments. When Garcia finally showed up, the speculated loudly about an alleged P50 million public relations allowance funded by generals.

At one point, a columnist in another newspaper described her as asking "searching questions" about various aspects of corruption in the military during the televised hearings.

High-profile stuff, except for one thing. Her questions were not searching enough. If anything, and taken together, they can be understood as an attempt to gloss over the fundamental reality that has marked the AFP the last 40 years. It was her father, the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, who corrupted the military.

This is not to say that everyone in the AFP, or even in the corps of generals, is unreasonably corrupt. Or that those generals who are in fact corrupt bear no responsibility because the blame has been laid squarely at the feet of the dictator's glass coffin.

Corruption in the military, like corruption elsewhere in government, remains a matter of choice. Individuals make the personal decision to divert some of the budget, or accept a supplier's bribe, or favor an influential businessman in a locality. But Marcos created a culture in the military that made it easier for both officers and the rank and file to make the fatal choice.

The country's most successful politician stayed by politicizing the AFP. From his first election as president, until his last days as dictator, Marcos applied bullheck politics ruthlessly. The most important demographics were Ilocano roots and personal loyalty. The best examples remain the most obvious. Marcos maneuvered his cousin and former driver Fabian Ver through the ranks, finally appointing him AFP chief of staff over much more qualified officers.

By aggressively promoting those loyal to him personally and those who hailed from the so-called Solid North, Marcos devalued the traditional military virtues of courage and competence, merit and discipline.

Marcos then corrupted the military by rewarding his partisans and buying off others. Essentially he turned generals into businessmen, even while they were in military service.

The stir over Garcia's many houses is a faint echo of public outrage over the generals' mansions that came to light in the mid-1980s—many of them in expensive real-estate villages near Camp Aguinaldo, all of them out of touch of a general's standard pay.

A commonsense lawyer, Marcos worked hard to keep up legal appearances. He was quite vain about the legal justification for martial rule, which he called constitutional authoritarianism. But in truth, his regime was kept in power in part through the use of the military.

Thus, Marcos undermined the military by giving it a heady taste of political power. He brought the boys out of the barracks, as it were, and it has since been a struggle to keep them down.

In other words, he corrupted the military in the same way he corrupted Philippine democracy itself, by subverting it from within and undermining its foundations.

This is the reality that the dictator's daughter fails to see, or does not want us to see. If she were serious about reforming the AFP—which has been since 1986 a sometimes troubled but undeniably pro-democratic institution—she would begin by looking for traces of her father's ruin. (They're everywhere.)

But that is as likely to happen as Garcia suddenly remembering a plausible justification for his unexplained wealth. No Marcos has ever apologized for the excesses, the torture, the billion-dollar corruption, that marked the dark days of the dictatorship. He shouldn't hold our breath, expecting them to start now.

Kerry vs Bush

SEPARATE OPINION

Footprint A. Cruz

MANY Filipinos are interested in the outcome of the American presidential election this coming Tuesday. Like it or not, we have historic ties with the United States dating back to a hundred years ago, not to mention our sentimental attachment to anything Hostile like Elvis and Veronica's Secret. Additionally, the United States is playing the self-serving role, not generally accepted, of an international policeman. The results of the coming election will affect not only that country but also the rest of the world.

As an interested spectator, I am as unsure as many Filipinos over the current contest between the top contenders for the presidency of the United States. The latest exit polls predict a neck-and-neck race between George W. Bush and John Kerry as if they were equally unexceptional. Ideas of these gods have been scarce of late as voters in the past although we can remember one surprising upset that saw the show in Thomas Dewey defeated by "give 'em hell" Harry S. Truman. President Bush has a slight edge over Senator Kerry, but the margin is within what is called the margin of error.

My own feel is that President Bush will win the waning election although Senator Kerry appears to be more deserving. Kerry is for a war against the principal criminal for abusing the Freedoms of the United States, because Americans would need to use like the Filipino voters in recent years. We elected Joseph Estrada as president in 1969 and such misfits as Jinggoy Estrada, Bong Revilla and Lito Lapid to the Senate this year.

American voters are also not always intelligent in their choices. In 1952, they elected Dwight Eisenhower to his own administration in two terms for the presidency. In 1960 and 1956, they preferred Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was an undistinguished military man. Peter Pone, in his treatise Alfred Newman. They did choose brilliant thinkers like Thomas Jefferson and John Adams; but they also elevated to the highest office in the land several candidates with little formal schooling. Lincoln was one of them, but he proved to be one of the greatest presidents.

According to the polls, Bush has substantial support in that state will him his bid for reelection. Unless he has become the reluctant achievement and has occasionally mutilated the English language, but he is at least not worse, although not better, than some previous occupants of the Oval Office. As former governor of Texas and during his current term as president, he has amassed tremendous experience in the art of governance that has earned him considerable backing from his followers.

The Democrats have looked him for his son as commander in chief and during the difficult fought by Iraq has won the war against him, he is losing the peace with American soldiers losing their lives daily against the insurgents. Also challenged are Bush's domestic policies which, they say, have resulted in the deterioration of the economy and the discrimination of the poor in favor of the rich. Moreover, Kerry also differs with Bush on various other issues like abortion, medical insurance, and social welfare.

A serious apprehension of the Democrats is that if Bush loses in a close election, he will claim as he did in 2000. And he can do this more easily this time, now that he is the President of the United States with all his powers and influence. If Gore were the popular vote in the last presidential election but lost the electoral vote because of vote-rigging in Florida, where Dubya's brother was the governor. Some say that even the federal Supreme Court connived in the cheating.

At any rate, I hope Kerry will be able to effect a similar Truman upset. He is not an appreciable baptism as Truman in 1948, but he is nonetheless a serious danger of being one more unexceptional of the Republican presidents. Still, a lot always the testosterone who triumphs in a fair election, as witness Bill Clinton who defeated Dubya's father in 1993, Roosevelt who beat Hoover in 1932, and Cleveland, who replaced Harrison in 1892. The winners, incidentally, were all Democrats.

Intellectually fuzzy entitlements flash by a mile and now all the close presidential elections do even looks more presidential than Bush. He will be more imposing than Bush in international conferences with his 6'2" height and his head of dark hair with just enough gray to give him an air of serious wisdom. These may seem superficial distinctions but they may seem a lot in close elections where serious stand for Clinton because, in Hillary's words, "he looked like a king."

I just since we are losing sexual, let us return to the topic of the impeachment in US presidential elections. Candidates with double letters in their names are the favorites. Thus, to cite recent examples, Bill Clinton beat George Bush, Jimmy Carter beat Gerald Ford, and Harry Truman beat Thomas Dewey. Then, Lyndon Johnson defeated Barry Goldwater who had a double-letter in his name. But as a rule, the superstition has proved true for William Mckinley, Calvin Coolidge, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy and others. John Kerry may be next, as I'll keep my fingers crossed.

Conversion

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

I HEARD the story about a priest who went to Europe for the first time. He was rather short, but that was not a problem at all until he had to use his function there. As he began the Mass, he realized that the altar was too high. All that the people could see was his face. He tried to overcome it by the intention by saying the sign of the cross standing from his forehead, then at his chest, then at his left chest and ending with his right chest.

* * *

In today's Gospel (Lk. 19, 1-10), we hear about Zacchaeus who also tried to remedy his situation. Literally, he could not see Jesus because he was short. Spiritually, he could not see Jesus because he was focused on the profits of this world, all he encountered was the People. He had to climb a tree to be able to see Jesus. He had to rise above himself and his situation. He had to leave the comfort and the safety of the solid ground where he was standing on so that he could see Jesus. If you could not really see God in your life, it is because you are not focused on Him. Or maybe it is because you refuse to leave behind the worldly treasures and attachments you are standing on.

* * *

There are times, as it were, when God mercifully diminishes the ground we are standing on so that we cling only to Him. In one instant, God can just move all that we have built so that we hold on only unto Him. Death, sickness, separation, failures are painful moments that eventually lead us to rely more on God rather than on ourselves. When the rug is pulled under your feet, perhaps, it is because God sees how proud we stand, and He wants you to kneel and hold on to Him once again. He who knows how to kneel ignorant will soon get to stand.

* * *

When a joy or one Act Nemesis, an ex-seminarian, at the Mass last Sunday. We are, a month ago I saw him at the ICU after he had a heart attack while playing tennis. The next month, outpatient here made 47-year-old Art realize in many things in life. Having been at the doorstep of death, he has realized that everything in this world is passing. In that point, nothing is really important, he said. All worldly possessions, all worldly views just fade away, and the most important thing at one point, he said, is the impending encounter with God. He has experienced God in a very personal and in a very real way.

Now, he, who was burdened by unforgiveness before, has learned to forgive, and has decided to focus his life on "things that really matter" from now on. He hope expressing how important the present moment is, how beautiful life is, and how wonderful God is. We Art, you are still alive because your calendars is not yet accomplished in this life. One thing I know about Art is his personal devotion to the Blessed Mother. Now, more than ever, he told me that he prays the rosary with so much love. He always begins the rosary which I quote from at the ICU, Life: Art has become more sincere, more prayerful and more serene because he has surrendered everything to God and to the Blessed Mother.

The road to conversion is not easy. In fact, it is not only bumpy. It could even be climactic. Some of us, like Art, just need a glimpse of God is working and, if we obey, we will find ourselves in His embrace and back home.

* * *

When a person has been searched by God, he is no longer the same. He begins to see himself and the world in God's eyes. This is what we call conversion. Literally, the daily papers have been filled with stories of conversion—one of the spiritual kind too: conversion for worldly profit. Let us all pray that real conversion occurs in our people, especially in our leaders who continue to amass wealth as if there was no more tomorrow and resurrection. I wonder what these greedy people who have plundered the nation will say to God at the end of their lives. They can justify and get away with their misdeeds before men, but not before God. Again I ask, how much money does one need to be happy in this life? When does one say "enough"? The human tree is when Jesus Himself said, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and in the end, lose his soul?"

* * *

Art Ali Seals' Day remind us all that we have a soul, and that we will meet our Creator someday. May our meeting with God be a pleasant one. This all depends on how well we live our lives now.

* * *

An invitation to an Adrian Recollection on Nov. 20, 2004, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Bakay Spiritan, Good Shepherd Convent, Aurora Boulevard, Quezon City to be conducted by Fr. Pat Reaton Mendoza, FMOM. Interested parties may contact these numbers: 911-5304/4-4656/981-4944/426-5881 and 725-0191.

* * *

Inviting you all to join the feast pilgrimage-in Naga, Legazpi and Tiwi-same on Nov. 24 to 26. Please contact 5226881 or 09/0214166 or 7219481.

* * *

A moment with the Lord:

Lord, remind me that life is short, and that what matters most in the end is the love that I have shared with you and with people. Amen.

Abaya's valedictory

RIVERLIE

Raimundo J. Farolan

FEARLESS forecast—not that I have a dislike for conservative Republicans or a fear for Liberal Democrats. But being a supporter (not inclined, I can carry on how Massachusetts Sen. John F. Kerry can win after the Boston Red Sox ended the greatest comeback in major league baseball history, defeating the New York Yankees despite losing three games down in the American League Championship Series. They were presented to reach the National League Championship Series by San Luis Cardinals, a first straight games, ending what has been the "curse" of the Red Sox since 1918 when they last won a World Series. For the benefit of our readers, in the 1918 season of the old Sox, when it can't win after the Boston Red Sox started

TALK of the TOWN

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Editor Juan F. Santamaría Jr.

How should we manage our debt?

THE DIFFERENT views featured in Talk of the Town about the causes of the fiscal crisis and the measures that need to be taken to fix the economy continue to elicit reactions from readers here and abroad.

The debate between economists from the University of the Philippines and members of non-government organizations, on the one hand, and between certain NGOs themselves, on the other, prompted Isbisa A. Sunaval to submit an article on the fiscal crisis.

Sunaval, who is based in the United States, says the cause of the crisis is corruption—the filching of capital infusions from abroad.

He suggests that the Philippines learn something from South Korea, which has curbed corruption, pursued rapid industrialization and adopted an outward-looking strategy.

For him, cutting ties to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank is suicidal.

But economist Alejandro Lichauco claims that the country is poor precisely because of the policies of the Washington-based multilateral agencies. He says that IMF prescriptions of opening up the domestic market to imports, devaluation, and fiscal and monetary restraint have led to the destruction of local industries and cuts in social services.

He wants the government to unilaterally repudiate the country's debt, the most radical proposal advanced so far to address the debt problem.

RP can learn from the Korean experience

By Edwin (Ed.S.) A. Sunaval

THE problem with "scholars" pursuing to the letter a plan is a purported attempt to put out the fire, produce a chevron turn in. Readers and economists have turned out to be chagrin running from unbalanced to distorted economics. We know of no one to rebut advocates of the 1970s' stewed-looking notion about it was about nationalists who are more loud in their political agenda than to the country.

Then nationalism divides the country's people into what is lacking vehicle fight among themselves over what is supposed to be good for the country after Ferdinand E. Marcos left the scene. They only agree on one thing: blame foreign investments, direct opinion aid and external debt as the culprit in all of the nation's woes.

The economy is limping. It is suicidal to smack and stress economic with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Economist who insist crisis requires those supposed economic tools—, the UP Baby is, it reports, with liberalization and tariff reforms of privatized graduate students, etc. that appeared in the inquirer News Service among others.)

In the fiscal crisis debate, economy is the position of those "scholars," public debt, expenditure cuts, or not to distribution in the measures. In fact, it is required to a debt mismanagement and massive corruption. Go to the cases of Argentina and the Philippines: they push the economy to the verge of collapse. It is not really what they say is.

Benign

The crash of the nation's close the 1983 billion debt burden of the Philippines, as of September 2004 is not something for idiots economists to explain the hell out of a disappointed nation. In fact, it may be categorized only as "benign."

South Korea's external liabilities totaled $129.7 billion at the end of 1996, the eve when the pain in the world found support that with $244.6 billion, followed by Russia's $177.3 billion and Mexico's $146.5billion.

South Korea is now the world's devoted on loans from foreign debt pulled the nation from success to become a newly industrialized country. In 1980, it was the 18th most indebted nation with $44.5 billion of debt and the fourth with $158.4 billion in 1997 when the country was hit hardest by the Asian financial crisis. The Philippines is far removed from this debt-for debacle.

Chaebol system

The Korean economy had the world's worst short-term maturing liabilities, making attempts at solving the Philippine problem by members of the academe like a classroom exercise. Nikkita less than one year, this fiscal night many searched $28.4 billion in 1998, topping the list of more than 140 economically disabled indebted countries.

It's how massive debts are monitored by the Philippines' business a life-defining exercise. We in contrast, in the mismanaged case of the Philippines, if measuring debt payment are backed up by healthy foreign exchange reserves, there should have been no cause for alarm, that is debt management, the Philippines and South Korea panelists in many ways.

The Philippine rates of their loans fallsthrow to its supposedly foreign exchange reserves valued as of international safeguards, thus the country has been unable to ward off impending disaster like the other in most causing this finger pointing. Under the watch, the loans have dropped this case as 45 percent on the average...well, below the 60 percent which is considered stable under World Bank standards. In the case of the Philippines, however, the debt service burden backed up the wrong way when they stumbled the prewalked like jackets for a downpayment.

The first step South Korea took was to decimate the country of the corruption parasites the Ilustrados. Rhee's First Republic had to be ousted the nation. As in the case of Argentina, high government officials spent time behind bars.

Export industrialization

Rare in natural resources, with low savings rate and a small domestic market, South Korea's industrialization program was often relied on successful looking savings. Government initiatives played an important role in the process. The inflow of foreign capital was generously encouraged to supplement the shortage of domestic savings. Discriminations and pure politics slowly gave way to the private sector's choice for competitive engagement with the government setting its sights in 1960s, such long-term investment programmed toward converting in the global market. Production and marketing of Korean cars worldwide are among the proud of these successes.

While the future of the Philippines is bleak, that of South Korea is bright, although the Asahi concept of industrialization may not be attainable in the face of the realities of globalization. Rhee strikes, is debt management, South Koreans wanted the right fast enough. Unlike the Rhee leadership, Koreans in general, were willing to sacrifice personal luxuries and a banking system vulnerable to government default, but perhaps most importantly, an overvalued currency that both to the appreciation of the dollar (to which the Korean peso was pegged) and to the Japanese trade technique moved and the devaluation of the yen) economy which reduced the competitiveness of Argentina's exports.

Thus, while Argentina's fiscal debacle like ours can understand, it also incurred deficits in income rate on most and negative growth declines in an international recession, at the same time that its domestic economy was contracting.

(Bernardo, a former finance undersecretary, is the president of Liman Bernardo Tee & Associates, Inc.)

Repudiate the debt

By Alejandro Lichauco

We have become fond of telling people where hungry mothers sell their babies and their bodies, where hungry fathers sell their organs, where hungry farmers sell their land, where hungry children are begging for food in the streets—cities have become so commonplace sights as to be considered ordinary.

Having been in the service, sometimes supervisor, of the economy since 1962, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) must accept primary responsibility for the consequences of its policy prescriptions.

A major consequence and by-product of those prescriptions has been the foreign debt for which the IMF insists debt bill remorseability. Those policy prescriptions, notably devaluation, trade liberalization and deregulation, are the primary problem. This is a fact acknowledged by no less than the staff of the IMF in a study released in 1988.

By insisting on those prescriptions, the IMF insists its debt to have sensitive food basket.

The policy prescriptions...bring a deadly pain of the continuous opening of the domestic market to imports, continuous devaluation of the peso and high interest rates to ensure...have led to and explain the destruction of local industries, the economic rise to penury and a depressive influence on business to such an extent that the country's economy can no more function.

The IMF prescriptions have provided to be a formula for hunger.

The policy prescriptions were designed to service foreign debt.

The IMF and the World Bank ignored the effect of facilitated bleeding to our industrialization based on 11 major industrial projects.

Foreign loans, which must have made foreign debt, were to carry out with which the IMF persuaded a succession of administration governments to accept the deadly mix of pain-inducing.

In spite of the warnings to have the Philippine debt crisis caused by IMF policy prescriptions, the IMF insisted the nation's major economic functionaries, notably the debt management, for the purpose, imposing role inducing in them a behavioral pattern of double allegiance.

The continued existence of the foreign debt deprives the Philippines of its economic sovereignty so that as long as those debts are outstanding the country's economy is to be subject to the capricious emphasis of the IMF, leaving the government powerless to adopt an independent development strategy appropriate to the real needs of the nation—particularly the need to alleviate the country's newly unemployed country.

The repercussions of the foreign debt and servicing thereof hinder the basic human rights of the people to decent employment, adequate food, decent health means full employment and enable them to lift themselves from odds of hunger and depression to which the IMF conditionalities have purposely condemned them.

The foreign debt has been the symbol of the nation's enslavement so well as the weapon with which the IMF described by Malaysia's former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad "as the greatest evil of the new colonialism," keeps the Filipino people enslaved and preserved in poverty and underdevelopment in the old colonialist tradition.

The Seams of the Philippines as the people highest policy making body of the land and officials has the power of states over many commitments and agreements entered into by the Executive Department, now has the incompatible obligation to the Filipino people to initiate the process which ends up in such a breakup, a revolution declaring in the sense of the disorder that the debt should be unilaterally repudiated.

The proposed Executive resolution should be transmitted to the United Nations along with a formal complaint against the IMF denouncing that body for having deliberately created the debt problem through policies that have transformed the Philippines—once the most promising and best performing economy in East Asia—into a basket-case economy.

(Lichauco, a chairman-emeritus of Nacionalista Party, was an adviser of President Ferdinand Marcos and is a recipient of the Legion of Honor. He was a founder of the 1971 Constitutional Convention. He is also a member of the Civil Liberties Union of the Philippines.)

Dollar RoPs can be a blessing or a curse

By Ramon L. Bernardo

ONE aspect of present economic debt problem that seems to have elicited scrutiny is the large share of dollar-denominated securities in the country's total outstanding peso-denominated securities. Popular Ramon L. Bernardo, chief economist, computer 42 percent of government's outstanding foreign-denominated debt securities, while peso 11 percent in 1995 (from almost nil in the early 1990s). After is the significance of this trend?

At first blush often dismissed, this large exposure to the capital markets means that unlike in the past decade, government is under a much more required as the international market's moral savings. This makes a vulnerable to the "events risk," or the risk of sudden and unexpected "news," economic or political, causing markets to close down abruptly, such government is not the ability to refinance its maturing obligations or to borrow at reasonable rates.

With the country's large selfsustaining requirements (roughly $3 billion in 2005, not counting refinancing needs of private dollar-bond issuers), a sudden withdrawal can be very damaging in terms of the additional spreads demanded by the market, or worse, can precipitate rapid interest rate.

Less talked about is the link between fiscal solvency and financial sector solvency resulting from this RoPs. Given the interest nature of RoPs yield-over (measured at) are can pass create of 28 percent (in the 10-year bond), and repatriation-wise (no capital drops under any circumstances) risk-averse capital standards), local banks have become major buyers of RoPs.

It is estimated that about 60% (about one of $10 billion stocks of local banks' investment) of peso assets are invested in RoPs. In addition to booking RoPs, banks have also developed derivative instruments with RoPs as underlying assets, that multiply leverage and enhance returns. These activities provide a channel through which a foreign crisis can find its way to financial crisis.

By itself, the fact that a significant presence of RoPs are held by banks does not mean that banks—or their ware accounts, either some vendors as local investors can be exposed to have greater exposure but to own government's debt. This helps to decouple government from any loss and direct investment.

Also, as all likelihood, banks can pass on the cost to customers that their banks are heavily invested in RoPs, or even if they do, have the capital capacity to absorb the losses. Moreover, the size of the country, especially with its open international economy in place promising to non-resident laundering. Likewise, under existing prudential regulations, RoPs are held to risk-weighted, leaving RoPs in a "no-brainer" for banks and thus, banks and their clients' exposure to capital market for these government securities.

From a financial sector stability viewpoint, however, the magnitude of bank exposure to government risk gives one pause. At the turn of to debt default in 2001, depression banks were similarly exposed to government debt through their holdings of government bond and foreign currency bonds and loans.

Although now exposure are not obvious—reportedly 25 percent of total assets in 2000—this was a source of vulnerability for the banking system, especially when establishment natural to weaken and depressed can be the case the smallest observed, means in 2000 to do-but the financial system from the fiscal problem, e.g., nothing government bonds to market impaired positive weighting by government bonds, could a bank less late to classified the system from the fiscal problem.

Of course, the Philippines is not in the same boat as Argentina, in particular that was a combination of external factors, and domestic policy failures, culminating was one of the world's highest and a banking system vulnerable to government default, but perhaps most importantly, an overvalued currency that both to the appreciation of the dollar (to which the peso was pegged) and to the Japanese trade technique moved and the devaluation of the yen) economy which reduced the competitiveness of Argentina's exports.

Thus, while Argentina's fiscal debacle like ours can understand, it also incurred deficits in income rate on most and negative growth declines in an international recession, at the same time that its domestic economy was contracting.

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Across the NATION

Ilocos Norte town mayor murdered

By Cristina Arandain
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LAOAG CITY—Mayor Eleuterio Mabuang, 58, of Vintar, Ilocos Norte, was jogging on his usual route in his native town Saturday morning when three men shot him at close range. Mabuang died instantly.

His police escort, SPO1 Nestor de San Juan, was also killed while a civilian escort, Rogelio de Leon, was wounded and taken to a hospital.

Senior Insp. Rolando Balisita, Ilocos Norte police director, said Mabuang and his two escorts were jogging at Barangay Margaay at 6:20 a.m. Saturday when two or three armed men approached them and without provocation started shooting them. Witnesses said M-14 and M-16 rifles in the attack.

A witness, who was also jogging at that time, told investigators that one suspect was wearing military fatigue pants and a t-shirt. The witness failed to describe the other suspects.

"The die-hard mauling suspect approached Mabuang while he was jogging near an irrigation canal and shot him at close range," Balisita said, quoting the witness.

Mabuang had been taking his daily exercises at that route, a popular jogging area.

Gunshots

The killings took place by Mabuang's group when he heard the gunshots.

Balisita said the police were looking at political and personal rivalry as the motive for the killing.

Mabuang, a former two-termer, was serving his second term as mayor of Vintar. It has 8 barangays (villages).

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Mabuang was elected in 1998 and reelected in 2001. He was supposed to end his term next year.

Mabuang survived the unexpected term of former Mayor Eufemio Mabuno who died after the 2001 elections.

Police and election officials described the 2004 elections in Vintar as "bloody," with supporters of Mabuang and Ting resorting to violence and political attacks before the elections.

Unsolved murders

The Ilocos General Edgar Aglipay, Philippine National Police chief, flew to Ilocos Norte on Sunday morning and met with local police officials.

Aglipay ordered the investigation of the murder and ordered Balisita to head the inquiry.

Ilocos Norte Gov. Ferdinand Marcos Jr. earlier pressed the alarm bell due to the spate of killings in Ilocos Norte. He also sought Aglipay's help in solving the string of unsolved murders in the province.

Mabuang's killing was the latest violent incident in the province this month. Last week, a village captain in Pindi town was gunned down by his brother.

Church questions militia recruitment in Occidental Mindoro

CITY OF CALAMBA—Church leaders here questioned the recruitment by the military of militiamen for the counter-insurgency operations in Occidental Mindoro.

The Apostolic Vicariate of San Jose (AVCAO), through Bishop Antonio Palang, issued a three-page pastoral statement questioning the recruitment of members of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu).

"It is really true that the peace and order situation in the province has reached the point that there is now a need to solicit the help of civilians for military operations?" the statement said.

The cause where there is conflict between the peacekeepers of the military and the village officials, what will prevail? And supposing the peacekeepers are in the line of duty, will they not just be a captive hostage?" the statement asked.

The AVCAO cited the abuses committed by what used to be called the Civilian Home Defense Force, which, it said, was used by individuals with vested interests, including corrupt politicians, for their private armies.

Former Sen. Wigberto Tañada, the former human rights committee chair in the 1990s, himself recommended the disbanding of the militia, such be unfeasible.

Palang said that in the pursuit of justice, the recommend of Calapa members would not do anything good as the usual modus of use in joining, if not for a living, to harvest, for revenge or women in frustration.

In this Cine town, members of the Sangguniang Bayan and league of barangays, in a meeting Sept. 28, passed a five-page position paper entitled "Ayaw namin ng (Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (We don't want Cafgu)."

The paper said Lt. Artes Mongolio, alpha company commanding officer and spokesperson of the 16th Infantry Battalion, Philippine Army, told residents in a open forum on Sept. 23 that 90 percent of the people of Sta. Cruz were New People's Army members or sympathizers.

"There's no need to form a Cafgu," said Sangguniang Bayan board member Oscar Catama.

"The applicants in our village are petitioners for land and they would just like to have firearms...," said Lorenzo Ivins, barangay captain of Alacan. Modesto P. Sevilla, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Woman celebrates delivery of triplets in Tacloban

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—"I am happy and overwhelmed."

That was how Noreen Acosta, a 17-year-old single mother, described how she felt after giving birth to triplets—two girls and a boy—at 9:40 p.m. at the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center (EVRMC) of this city.

Noreen, however, said that she has yet to see her triplets who were, upon delivery, placed separately in incubators by physicians.

The first-time mother, who delivered the three babies by normal spontaneous, is in good condition. But the babies need close monitoring due to their very fragile health condition, Dr. Cecil Adalid said.

Noreen delivered the babies on her eighth month of pregnancy. She stayed at the delivery room for almost three hours.

"We are taking a close monitoring of the three babies as they were born premature. Two of them have developed techniques of fast breathing (sic)," Adalid said the hopeless. Otherwise, she said, the three are in "stable condition."

Adalid, who is one of the pediatricians that are handling after the babies, said the triplets were given the names Maria Josina, Maria Josephina and Josephus by their proud grandmother, Rodorica, 36.

Josephus and Maria Joana were the ones who developed underweight, according to Adalid.

Based on the records of the hospital, Noreen delivered Maria Josina at 1:24 a.m., until Josh Matthew and Maria Josephina coming out in quick succession, separated by just a few seconds. Official records of the hospital, however, showed that the two younger children were delivered at 1:25 a.m.

Josephus weighed 2,200 grams while her two sisters both weighed 1,800 grams.

The young mother told the doctors that she knew that she would be delivering triplets under the ultrasound examination when she was seven months pregnant.

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Arrests lead police to thriving drug trade in Nueva Vizcaya jail

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—Local government and police officials have uncovered widespread drug trafficking inside the provincial jail, reinforcing earlier reports that drug lords have penetrated the provincial capital for their activities.

This developed at sundown of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) earlier arrested two suspected drug pushers in a shabu buy-bust operation within the provincial capitol hall here where the provincial jail is situated.

Arrested were Noel Feliciano, 38, a farmer-tenant, and Ronnie Liriano, 30, Feliciano slotted 5 gram of shabu and P1,600 to watchdecovery.

Liriano, an inmate at the provincial jail, was arrested in a follow-up operation. Seized from him were 5 gram of shabu and P1,000 in marked money.

Sources

"According to the suspects, the drugs came from the provincial jail," Insp. Ronald Tegan, provincial CIDG officer, said.

Tegan said Liriano and Feliciano had told investigators that an inmate and a suspected drug pusher named PAO,000 a week by peddling shabu inside the jail.

The incident prompted the police to conduct a surprise search and inspection of the jail which houses 297 inmates.

Police recovered from a cell drug paraphernalia such as shabu for shabu, suspected tooters and assorted knives. Also recovered were unaided money used by CIDG operatives during the buy-bust operation.

The cell was used to inmates who had been designated as jail trustees, Bernie Cadiero, provincial warden, said.

A security guard who requested anonymity said there was no regular inspection of cells to check drug peddling in the jail.

The provincial board last week approved a resolution authorized by Board Member Fortunato Bacalso Jr. seeking a administrative drug test for guards in the provincial jail and capitol. Ben Moses Dhoys, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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SUWANG' FEAST
Children hold models of garlic during the country's first ever sawang (monster) festival held in Cupit, which is trying to attract an image of being a refuge of ghosts and ghouls.

Youth groups seek greater role in peace process

DAVAO CITY... Some 50 youth organizations representing the Samal Island and southern communities in Mindanao converged on a three-day youth summit here that ended on Thursday.

During the summit, the youths drafted a proposal called the Young People's Summit Declaration, which seeks to promote participation of young people in the governance monitoring of the months agreement" between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The draft also listed some of their sectoral problems.

Copies of the proposal would be submitted to the GRP panel and the MILF according to Baloy Mindanao, a non-government organization that hosted the summit.

William Bonardi, president of the United Youth of the Philippines, said the youth, instead of armed hostilities in conflict-affected areas, young people want a greater role in the peace process to ensure that the warring forces comply with the ceasefire agreements.

The Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities by the military and the MILF was signed in 1998 and reaffirmed through an interagreement in 2000 by both parties.

However, it has been violated through either major or minor offensive and counter-offensives in the provinces of Davao Oriental, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat and Zamboanga Sibugay.

Bonardi said young people would join other sectors in their communities in calling for adherence to the truce.

"But, he said, would ensure that violence, which tends to create incentive violence to the countries, would not erupt.

Ann Mandawil, head of the MILF secretariat's panel secretariat, said that big talks with the government "are always the hardest to follow" in any peace negotiations anywhere in the world.

But Mandawil expressed optimism that with the coming of the Independent Commission Monitoring Team, the agreement would be strictly observed.

Aside from wanting a greater role in the peace process, the youths also urged the negotiating parties to "be more transparent in the peace process and agreements reached."

Transparency, they said, could be achieved through the conduct of updates and dialogues with communities including the young people.

The youths also listed several other agenda that they want the government to attend to, including a review of related cases done in connection with the declaration of Mindanao.

Noel Mimpuda, a youth leader of from the Bulusan Lumbayanon tribal confederated students association in Maguindanao, said the resulting education orientation has not helped preserve indigenous culture. PDI Mindanao Bureau

Silica mining operation suspended over run-offs

By Rosy G. Arnaiz
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—The Mines and Geosciences Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Central Visayas has suspended the operation of a mining firm in Sipaquio, a town some 78 km north of here, for environmental violations.

Roger A. Ee Jiao, officer in charge of the bureau, ordered on Oct. 1, 2 a.m. to the office mining permit of the Lone Land Corp. Inc. (LLCI).

The bureau asked the firm to build silt ponds and prevent tracks of mining wastes.

Ee Jiao also ordered the LLCI to finalize a memorandum of agreement for the creation of the Mines Rehabilitation Fund Committee and the establishment of an initial Rehabilitation Cash Fund in the amount of P150,000 and the P80,000 Monitoring Trust Fund to be deposited in a government depository bank.

Dr Clint earlier was issued on the recommendation of the multipartite monitoring team, which conducted its third quarter monitoring activity of the LLCI on Sept. 1.

Antonio Mayor Edred Estrella said he also recommended the suspension of the operations of LLCI because the firm's operations power is given link to two barrios of the town's Barangay Bantayan, which is one of the major rice producing villages in the province.

Estrella, in his letter to Governor Lucy Torres-Gomez, cited complaints of residents, fishermen and boatmen of Candidoza, and when the flood is combined and mixed in a outfall, the brackish Cleofasol Tinggawan, fishes shrink.

The deadly sediment, silt-la gushed into waters, clog coral tissues, strangle them of their nutrients through the process called overnaps.

The fermented family members were fatigue as a handicap on their self. In distinguished from the rest of the members.

Since traditional practices are now scarce, any scholar shown is used in a substitute, Mabuyang said.

Buying a wake, white ribbons and white crepe paper are used to note her remember as male from the members and as belts for females.

In expressing their condolences to a family and in trying to comfort them in mourning, the Ifugao practice the ungaypi, where one chants how much you the family member's death has brought, Mabuyang said.

Ungaypi-an is another ritual where one describes the dead's educational attainment, character and work habit.

Punishment

In trying to ease the pain of relatives, persons chasing the wake, mudukupan is done. One touches the unknown young that they follow. Whoever fails to go along is punished by taking him to water to perform a rain dance ungaypi.

The whole time during the wake, the family, or the relatives of passing on face ungaypi-an related to children, jointmates.

On the night before the burial, the eldest duty awake until morning when the dead is taken to his or her final resting place.

The relatives and pakpakdo do not the Tinggawan overture of an eulogy but those are not done in church but at the house of the dead before he or she is buried.

Pakpakdo in Ifugao means saying goodbye. Someone who knows the dead well will express his feelings of the deceased.

Pakpakdo in Ifugao means saying goodbye. Someone who knows the dead well will express his feelings of the deceased.

Abra tribe continues traditional mourning rituals

By Artha Rica Paredes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LAGANGILANG, Abra—Despite modernization, Tinggawan of Abra practice the tribe's traditional mourning rite for dead.

Alfredo Mabuyang, president of the Tinggawan Ifugao Cultural Association of Candidoza, said when the dead is embalmed and placed in a coffin, the beloved (Ifugao) Tinggawan relatives chants.

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Ungaypi-an is another ritual where one describes the dead's educational attainment, character and work habit.

Punishment

In trying to ease the pain of relatives, persons chasing the wake, mudukupan is done. One touches the unknown young that they follow. Whoever fails to go along is punished by taking him to water to perform a rain dance ungaypi.

The whole time during the wake, the family, or the relatives of passing on face ungaypi-an related to children, jointmates.

On the night before the burial, the eldest duty awake until morning when the dead is taken to his or her final resting place.

The relatives and pakpakdo do not the Tinggawan overture of an eulogy but those are not done in church but at the house of the dead before he or she is buried.

Pakpakdo in Ifugao means saying goodbye. Someone who knows the dead well will express his feelings of the deceased.

Offering

The meal involved relatives, up to the fifth degree, offering food, wine or money to the bereaved family.

"Traditionally they give food (pinapot) and drinks (bas), but for practical reasons, relatives tend to give money to expedite," Tinggawan said.

During burial, mourners are given bamboo sticks, called agnit, to drive away bad spirits.

Two black pigs are butchered, one at the house of the dead and another one at the cemetery. This practice is called the nuwaanbasan.

Ifa blood is sprinkled at the final resting place of the dead to appease the bad spirits, Tinggawan said.

After the burial, relatives mourners return to the house of the bereaved family, the pig killed is mixed with coconut oil and applied at the forehead of relatives. Leaves called pagsinga are used to apply the blood and oil to the relatives' feet.

After this, the white mourning clothes are removed and they dance the tadek. This ritual is called ngayagang because they try to drive off the grief brought about by mourning.

The close of the pig is used for signs and is used for predictions for things to come in the family and community.

A day after the burial, as many (offering) is made at the divided corners outside the house.

NLEX rates OKd by FVR, not GMA, board told

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The Manila North Luzon Tollways Corp. (MNTC) clarified on Wednesday that it was Former President Fidel Ramos, not President Macapagal-Arroyo, who approved the agreement that increased toll rates along the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) for motorcycle passenger.

During an ex-boc presented board hearing on the impending NLEX toll rates, Mariano Ortiza, MNTC assistant vice president for public information and external relations, told Vice Gov. Jennifer Cadaw and the board members here that Ramos approved the Supplemental Toll Operation Agreement (STOA) in June 1998.

The personnel officials said they brought it to the Arroyo who approved the agreement.

Ortiza, however, told former President Joseph Estrada and Mr. to your know about the STOA and did not object to it. She said the Department of Justice reviewed the agreement in 2000 and in 2001 and found it to be "legally sound and enforceable."

The STOA, signed by the MNTC and the Philippine government through the Toll Regulatory Board in April 1998, originally authorized the MNTC to collect only 52 centavos per kilometer from cars, jeeps, vans and other light vehicles. But MNTC officials said by its president, Jesus de Aseo, since the 52 centavos per km had been frozen for 10 years because of the peso depreciation against the US dollar and inflation rates since 1988.

Before Chairman this year, the MNTC would start charging a fixed rate of P42 for all types of vehicles from Balintawak to Bocaue, Bulacan, and P2.40 per km for small vehicles from Bocaue to Mabalacat, Pampanga.

Light trucks and buses would have to pay P6.25 per km while heavy trucks and trailers P7.47 per km. For the entire stretch of the 84-km NLEX from Mabalacat, Pampanga to Balintawak in Quezon City, small vehicles would be charged about P200 one-way toll, while medium trucks some P910, and heavy trucks and trailers, P637.

The original toll rate along the NLEX was 35 centavos per km for the government-owned Philippine Tollways Management Corp., which operates the expressway, adjusted the rate to 52 centavos per km on July 15.

Board Member Tim Fields said the fees was used by the MNTC to secure loans from Asian Development Bank and other international lending institutions.

RAMOS

Ortiz said the provincial board would invite representatives of the TRB, "if it is necessary," before the board comes out with a position and about of action on the impending toll rate adjustment. Joe Medina, PDI Central Luzon Desk

PAMPANGA CAPITAL FIRE

Building owners, 36 execs face raps

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—A panel investigating the Oct. 2 fire that killed eight workers of a supermarket here recommended on Friday the filing of criminal cases against the establishment's owners and the filing of administrative charges against 36 fire officials and personnel.

The panel, chaired by city legal officer Errol Abello, formed Task and Marcito Chio, owners of the Pepsoup's Sunvic Mart, Eddie Ilac reckless imprudence with multiple homicide.

In a report released on Friday, it said the owners "refused to cooperate and address the violations" of the fire safety code despite repeated warnings by the Bureau of Fire Protection.

Chief Insp. Johnny Cascasan, then city's former fire marshal, once acted immediately before his removal because he issued a few notices to the supermarket despite violations of the Fire Code.

The panel said Supt. Emmanuel Arienal, provincial fire marshal, and Chief Insp. Wenie Rosales, the current fire marshal, as well as 22 firemen committed "neglect in the performance of their duties."

"They failed to at least exert efforts to attempt the rescue of the trapped victims," the panel said.

Mayor Oscar Rodriguez upheld the findings of the panel and ordered Abello, in coordination with the Philippine National Police, to file the charges on behalf of the victims.

They were trapped and charred to death on the fourth floor, which was illegally built.

The panel found former Mayor Reynaldo de Guzman, now a Pampanga representative, not liable in what has been so far this capital's deadly fire.

City Administrator Pet Cayetano said Aquino issued the mayor's permit based on a clearance signed by Cascasan. The city government, he said, was not furnished reports by the BFP.

Rodriguez said he has "personal reservations" with the findings.

He said what these were, he cited Aquino's role in setting up the Business One-Stop Shop that enabled the Chios to obtain a permit without compliance with Fire Code provisions.

The fourth floor had no fire exit and escape ladders, by windows were padlocked and covered with metal grills.

City Insp. Pantello Cupco was not held liable because he did not issue an occupancy permit to the supermarket owners.

Rodriguez on Friday also suspended the operations of the one-stop shop. Only the documents of business establishments that have complied with health, sanitary, fire and tax requirements will be processed, he said.

The panel, also comprised of Cayetano, human resource officer Sonia Sison, engineer Renato Jacinto and Commodore Rodel Hadji, Alex Pente and Rupprt Ramos, described the probe as "exhaustive."

Aside said the city government was pursuing charges although the Chios continue to seek an out-of-court settlement with the families of the victims. Marjorie Evidor, *PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Quezon folk protest rampant quarrying

LUCENA CITY—About 7,000 protesters demanded the suspension of quarrying in Quezon province and the continuance demolition of 101 Banahaw, during a rally here Tuesday.

It a program held in front of the governor's office, the protesters led by Quezon Representative Rafael Nantes and Governor Eduardo Padlan the office of the Provincial Mining and Regulatory Board, to reconsider their dispute over the boards had performance.

"The rampant quarry operations around Mt. Banahaw must stop. The quarry operators are blatantly destroying a fragile mountain, which needs complete protection and rehabilitation," Nantes said.

Several years mounting several hundred injuries nurses and at least 16 nurses dying after a landslide, the main source of aggregates for Metro Manila and Southern Tagalog since the construction boom began in the 1980s.

Sariaya government records show that at least 17 operations, trust sand and gravel in the area.

Sariaya Mayor Cesario Coronacion said she was shocked when she first saw the extent of the quarry operations in her town. "We're now in the thick of investigation of all quarry operations in our locality," she told the Inquirer.

The Lagonoy Bridge in Sariaya collapsed at the height of typhoon "Reming" in 1995 due to the strong current of the heavily mined river running from the denuded portions of Mt. Banahaw.

The river current loosened the base of the bridge's foundation.

Two other towns, Tayong and Dolores, also host several quarry operations.

Fr. Raul Enriquez, chair of the Secretariat of Advocating Mary poor in Southern Tagalog Region or Southern Quezon, which spearheaded the rally, appealed to all provincial board members to heed the people's call against quarry operations.

"If the Sangguniang Panlalawigan will still not act, the people will put the matter into their hands," Enriquez said in a speech before the Quezon board.

Environment Secretary Michael Defensor has ordered a moratorium on all applications for environmental compliance certificates involving sand and gravel quarry operations in Quezon.

In a faxed statement to Tanggol Kalikasan, Gaerlan's spokesman Tuesday, Defensor said he received alarming reports that sand and gravel extraction had been proceeding with reckless abandon.

"By same token, even mountain quarrying..." Defensor said. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI South-ern Luzon Bureau*

300 workers say traders stole their machines

SAN PEDRO, Laguna—Over 300 displaced workers of an American firm that closed shop last year accused the owners of a construction company here of stealing machinery that they said have been awarded to them in lieu of their unpaid salaries.

The machines, worth about P100 million, were used for the production of books and eyes for brassieres.

Elpidio Cabrera, representative of former managers and employees of Branford Phils. Inc. (BPI), accused owners Rhoda Filipina Bolayre and Rachel Filipina of being behind the theft of the machines from the buildings that their company rented in Immaculate Landscape in Old. B.

The buildings belong to the Filipina, who also own the Filipina Construction Corp. (FCC), one of the biggest construction firms in Laguna.

But the duties said the Cabrera group does not own the machines.

In a letter sent to the Inquirer, the owners said that as the owners of the rented buildings, FCC has the right to dispose of the properties left by BPI to offset the debts that the company owed to them.

Cabrera said workers near their former factory saw several unidentified men using two 10-wheel trucks load the equipment from the buildings without their consent.

Cabrera said their group earmarked efforts after the world's biggest producer of hook-and-eye fasteners, stopped operations in July 2003 after supposedly suffering from huge losses.

Its owner, American businessman Joseph Samenhaus, failed to pay the employees their benefits, including separation pay and back wages.

In its June 11 decision, the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) ordered the BPI to transfer the company's properties to Cabrera's group, composed of 95 former managers and supervisors and 229 rank-and-file workers, as payment for their wages and other benefits.

Documents from the NLRC showed that the workers owed the ex-workers some P70 million.

The Filipina sisters said in their letter that since BPI closed shop in 2003, the management and officers of the company "very suddenly disappeared and abandoned the leased premises."

Since then BPI had failed to pay rent amounting to million of pesos, they said in the letter.

The letter said under the contract they had with BPI, "all properties and equipment left at the leased premises are security for BPI's obligations in [sic]."

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

HOMEWARD BOUND

Passengers wait for rides to Lagayi City at a bus terminal in Pasay City to spend All Souls' Day in their hometowns.

Cops raid Zambo City house, seize fake dollars, drugs

ZAMBOANGA CITY— Police authorities here on Friday evening seized close to P600,000 in suspected fake dollar bills and as many as four large sachets of shabu from a former and ones during a buy-bust operation.

The suspects, who were also arrested, were carrying identification cards supposedly issued by the Criminal Detection and Investigation Group.

Western Area Police commander Chief Supt. Vidal Querol said they were still trying to determine if the dollar bills, with a total amount of $11,500, were counterfeit or not.

He said the police were also verifying if the ID cards were authentic or fake.

Authenticity check

Querol said the police would be requesting the Central Bank and the ID government to help them verify the authenticity of the seized money.

Senior Supt. Mario Braga, city police chief, identified the suspects as Majid Sahibon, a former police officer, and his son Muhaimin.

Braga said they have been monitoring the suspects for the past days and on Friday evening, police decided to launch a buy-bust operation.

He said around 8 p.m., members of the Zamboanga City anti-Illegal Drug Special Operation Task Force barged into the Sahibons' house in Barangay Baliwasan Cano. The Sahibons did not resist arrest.

Aside from the drugs and the suspected counterfeit dollars, Braga said the cause was able to recover a .45 cal. pistol with five ammunition.

Querol said the two would initially be charged with illegal possession of firearms and selling of prohibited drugs. *Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Reyes says better LGU governance GMA agenda

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes Thursday tool local governments officials here to push for the implementation of Republic Acts 9, 10 and 11 in launching the Governance Imposition 2006 here.

The city was picked as one of the four sites for the program's launching.

The program, funded by the Local Government Support Program (LGSP), aims to provide an opportunity for local governments units (LGUs) to showcase their exemplary and replicable practices, innovations, tools and technologies, according to Secretary Reyes.

The LGSP is one of the largest foreign-funded development programs in the country working directly with LGUs in support of the country's decentralization efforts.

It is a P1 billion, four-year program funded by the Canadian International Development Agency.

Reyes said the program complements and advances President Macapagal-Arroyo's 10-point agenda.

"This is aimed at providing the local government level to build capabilities for governance...," Reyes said during the opening ceremonies of the program here.

At a press conference later, Reyes said besides the program, LGUs here would be able to determine their capabilities to deliver essential services. *Bruce C. Alhambra, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

REYES at a recent forum on corruption in the military.

Cholera cases, deaths alarm health execs in Negros Occidental

By Carlo P Gonzaga
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Health officials in Negros Occidental have raised alarm over 11 cholera cases recorded at a government hospital here since November.

Even just one case of cholera could already be considered an "outbreak," according to Dr. Ariel Leyda, head of the department of pathology of the Corazon Locsin Montelibano Memorial Regional Hospital (CLMMRH) here.

"Anything communicable is classified as [one] if it will jeopardize the health of the community," he said.

Leyda said that in the last three years, the CLMMRH had no cholera cases, until September this year.

One of 10 patients admitted at the CLMMRH for gastroenteritis were the last two months—11 in September and 59 in October—28 of them had stool examinations and 11 were found positive for vibrio cholerae, he said.

Of the 80 patients suffering from dehydration, 13 had died, and Dr. Renato Hassan, CLMMRH chief of clinics, said it was possible that some of them were suffering from cholera.

Most of the 80 patients are from Bacolod City.

Dr. Luisa Hilvos, provincial health officer, said that of the 11 confirmed cholera cases, nine were from Bacolod and one each from the cities of Victorias and Bago.

She said their investigation showed that the patients from Bago who acquired cholera had eaten contaminated food in Pasay, in Bacolod.

Dr. Jerry Pepanio of the Bacolod City Health Office said CHO has been conducting sanitary inspections and epidemiological tests to determine the source of contamination in Bacolod City.

He said they were doing this to determine the sources of the contaminated water to stop the disease from spreading.

Symptoms of cholera are profuse watery stool and diarrhea, causing rapid dehydration that could lead to organ failure and death if not treated immediately, Leyda said.

INQUIRER Mindanao

Editor Jun Bandigued
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War of the fruits in T'boli land

By Aquiles Z. Zonio
T'boli, South Cotabato

THE T'BOLI people are caught in a tug-of-war between two groups desperately wanting to exploit the natural bounty of their ancestral land in South Cotabato.

Two local cooperatives want to plant pineapple in the area, but another group, an outsider, prefers banana.

The natives are confused. Only a few of them have acquired formal schooling, and those are fears that the communities could be tricked or easily swayed to lease their land for a pittance.

Even those the tribespeople regard as leaders—experienced and educated—are divided. And they are in a quandary as to where to go for help.

Overlapping

Before planting pineapple in about 5,000 hectares of land, mostly owned by the natives, the Lainon Multi-Purpose Cooperative (LMPC) and the T'boli Multi-Purpose Cooperative (TMPOC) were through the tedious process of acquiring an environmental compliance certificate (ECC).

The farmers' co-ops are beneficiaries of the government's land reform program. They have a combined membership of 900, most of them former indigenous people.

They have been convinced to grow pineapple by Dole Philippines (Dole), which serves as their technical and marketing partner, under a project funded by loans from the Land Bank of the Philippines.

The pineapple project covers 12 of T'boli town's 23 barangays, and the co-ops intend to expand their plantation by about 5,000 more hectares in the next five years.

The project had barely started when Upland Banana Corp. (UBC), a subsidiary of the ABC Group of Companies, came in, banking for an area to develop into a banana plantation. UBC plans to pour in P45 million in investments in the 5,000-hectare site.

The idea drew strong opposition from the pineapple growers. In April, the co-ops passed a joint resolution asking then Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun to stop the entry of UBC, particularly in areas identified as sites for the pineapple project.

Datu Boy Cordada, LMPC chair, said the areas would overlap with the co-ops' pineapple fields in eight barangays. He feared that chemicals used in the banana plantation, which would be adjacent to areas planted with pineapple, could contaminate the co-ops' produce, resulting in their overnight rejection by buyers in the market.

Not environment-friendly

He claimed that the land canvassing, establishment of a nursery and the lease contract entered by UBC officials without clearance from the Protected Area Management Board and an ECC were a clear violation of the law.

The allegations were contained in a DENR memo directed by Jim Sampaleo, DENR director for Central Mindanao, which investigated the complaint aired by the co-ops against UBC in a memorandum dated May 13, 2004.

In its inspection report dated June 8, the team recommended that UBC first secure an ECC before starting any activity. It further stated that six of the eight barangays covered by the banana plantation were within the Allah Valley Protected Landscape.

UBC got the PAMB clearance only on July 27, long after it had started land operations.

Officials and members of the cooperatives fear that the banana plantation, aside from destroying their existing pineapple growing project, will result in pollution and other adverse ecological consequences, and displace residents in the affected areas.

"Who will pay for the damages to our project, including bank loans?" Cordada asked.

A banana plantation, one co-op official said, required a huge volume of water. Providing this could stay dry up the water supply to landowners, especially farmers, in the towns of Surallah, Banga, Tupi, Tampakan and Norala. These localities depend on the Banga River as source of potable water and irrigation.

Noel Wotoy, manager for ownership and land reform of the ABC Group of Companies, alleged the heads of the co-ops, saying no one would be displaced and that providing the environment was their main concern.

Residents will be given preference in the hiring of workers, Wotoy said. The company, he added, would undertake mitigating measures to preserve and protect the environment.

The official said the banana growing project had the written approval of the tribal chieftains of the eight barangays.

Benefits for whom?

Adolfo Yanes Jr, a member of the board of directors of TMPOC, claimed that the majority, if not all, of the members of the cooperatives had already mortgaged their land in big traders in the town.

Yanes, himself a T'boli, said that as consultants for fellow farmers from the clutches of these traders, the co-ops furnished the so-called Land Redemption Program.

Land mortgaged by the natives to the traders would be redeemed by the co-ops under the program. The co-ops and the landowners would then enter into a lease agreement allowing the redeemed land to be converted into pineapple plantation.

The landowners are also given priority in hiring workers for the project. "Aside from having the chance of getting back their land, the natives are provided employment while earning from rentals paid by the co-ops," Yanes said.

The co-ops are paying P22,000 per hectare of land per cycle (1.5 years) to the landowners as rental. On the other hand, the UBC rental rate is P13,000 per hectare per year, over a period of 25 years.

Yanes said the UBC rental scheme was not only unjust but would also displace the farmer from their ancestral lands.

Coerced

Cordada claimed that about 20

THE ENTRY of big capitalists in their homeland had put the T'boli people in a quandary over pineapples and bananas.

natives who were parties to the lease contract with UBC had already decided to back out.

An owner of a 1.5-hectare piece of property said that when he decided to renounce the contract he had signed, the company threatened to file a case against him. "I am 53 years old. By the time I get hold of my land [under the UBC contract], I would already be 58," Mario Elagil said in Ilonggo.

Manuel Unales, 35, who owns a 2.5-hectare lot, said he also signed a loan contract with UBC. He said he realized that he would be receiving only a rental from UBC after visiting Lapanday Global Fruits in Tampakan town in South Cotabato.

The landowners in Tampakan receive P50,000 per hectare as yearly rental. The contract, for which they got P15,000 as signing bonus, will last for just six years.

Unales said they were not aware that the contract with UBC would expire only after 25 long years. No representatives from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples was present during the contract signing, he added.

After he decided to back out, Unales said UBC refused to take back the 95,000 advanced rental he had received.

The company, he said, filed a complaint before the barangay court against him, but he added that he was not even aware of its nature.

He is unfazed. "I am willing to go to jail if that's what I have to, but I stand by my principles."

Unales said he was just in dismayed when a tribal leader came to convince him not to withdraw from UBC. The tribal leader, who is also a village chieftain in Unales's area, reportedly serves as a land consultant for UBC and receives P1,000 per hectare as remuneration.

Bin Laden warns US

From page A1

US television news channels broke into their programs to show the al-Qaida leader's video message to the American people.

Drop-off at TV station

Al-Jazeera said it received the tape at its offices in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad.

The tape was dropped off at the gate of the station's office in an envelope on Friday, just hours before it aired, said Ahmad Khadr Ra'ashdan, Al-Jazeera's bureau chief in Pakistan.

"We received it in Pakistan — Somebody dropped it yesterday at the gate," Ziddah said. "The guard brought it to our shop and, like any mail, it was in an envelope. I opened it and it was a big scoop."

Ziddah said he immediately transmitted the tape to Al-Jazeera's headquarters in the Gulf nation of Qatar.

Bin Laden and his top deputy Egyptian surgeon Ayman al-Zawahiri, are both believed to be hiding in the mountains that straddle the Afghan-Pakistan border, although there has been no hard evidence of their whereabouts for more than three years.

Ziddah said the 18-minute tape was received by the station in Pakistan did not necessarily mean that Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri were in the area.

Both sharpened his attacks on rival Kerry after warning that Bin Laden's latest threats would not sway the US election.

'Shameful'

But quite too hours after reaching out to Kerry in his first public remarks on the message, Bush said the Democrat's charge that he'd set aside his hunt for Bin Laden to take US forces in late 2001 was "especially shameful."

"Unfortunately my opponent tonight continued to say things he knows are not true, accusing our military of pausing up a chance to get Osama bin Laden at Tora Bora," in Afghanistan, in 2001, the Republican president told cheering supporters in Ohio.

"As the commander in charge of that operation, [retired general] Tommy Franks has said: It's simply not the case," Bush said. "It is especially shameful in the light of a new tape from Americans."

Kerry appeared uncertain about how to respond to Bin Laden's bombshell appearance after his initial comments sparked a firestorm within the Democ campaign.

In a television interview that marked the first response in the race from either candidate, Kerry vowed to hunt down and kill terrorists, and said America was united in this duties.

Then, repeating a runoff from his stump speeches, he said: "I regret that when George Bush had the opportunity in Afghanistan at Tora Bora, he didn't go out and hunt down and kill Osama bin Laden. He outsourced to the war lords."

Inappropriate

Bush aides argued that the law was inappropriate in light of the Bin Laden tape.

Speaking to reporters in Ohio, Bush's senior communications director Dan Bartlett said Kerry should have frozen his criticisms for 12 hours.

"You would think that there would be a, maybe, 12 hours in let the American people absorb what has just happened today," he said.

Prodded on why Kerry should have stopped criticizing the president, Bartlett vowed his response was that the political area that Kerry's attack had been "discredited."

Kerry appeared to heed the call, meeting well clear of the accusation in his next rally in Rhode Island, reserving only to make America safer than Bush had, after delivering a stern statement in front of his campaign jet on the tarmac of a Florida airport.

"In response to the tape of Osama bin Laden, let me just make it clear, crystal clear, as Americans we are united in our determination to hunt down and destroy Osama bin Laden and the terrorists," Kerry said.

"We will not be distracted. I will not go to absolutely nothing to hunt down, capture or kill the terrorists wherever they are, whatever it takes," he said.

Arnold in Ohio

Bush on Friday enlisted Hollywood action star turned California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in stump for him in Ohio, a critical up-for-grabs state, where the candidates are neck-and-neck.

"Now is the time to flex your muscles for bold leadership, for a strong economy," the latter bodybuilding superstar said. "If you flex your muscles November 2nd, I promise you: President Bush will be back."

Earlier, Bush had insisted that the tape—in which Bin Laden mocked the president who once vowed to catch him "dead or alive"—would not affect the election.

"Let me make the very clear, democracy will not be intimidated or influenced by an enemy of our country," Bush said in a hunt. "It's not going to work on us as we pursue victory in Iraq."

"You saw Osama Kerry agree with that," he added. "I also want to say to the American people that we are as resolute as ever, and I am confident that we will prevail." AFP, New York Time News Service, AP

THE TERMINATOR campaigns for Bush in up-for-grabs state of Ohio.

NO HEED to wear masks for Picopico and Rusonia, who are all dressed up to taunt and delight the stay visitors to the Malabar Zoo on Halloween, shown here with their keeper Manny Tangco.

Living inside a cemetery . . .

From page A1

"We repair about everything here. I take my own personnel, do my purchasing worldwide for improvement of our materials," he said.

Three rubber-tired tramlike trains are used to transport the mourning up and down the avenues. The trains are well-ventilated and the surroundings are neat and clean. Some of the problems include installing a water supply system for the plants, termites attacking the trees, urban air pollution which causes markers to deteriorate, and putting out the occasional grass fire.

About the worst problem that Mr. Rachael faced with his 50 employees. The strong winds would often break tree branches, if not topple the trees entirely and damage some grave markers.

Busiest job

But having dealt successfully with such problems, he recalled to jobs about his job: "Being working in the busiest job in the world."

He gave a shudder and knocked on wood when asked if there had been instances of vandalism. Recently Muslim militants vandalized the graves of British soldiers from World War II in Cana, the area said.

Texas and his staff also arrange arrangements for visiting US civilian and military dignitaries during Veterans Day and Memorial Day, are running schedules for overseas and relatives of those buried there, and answer letters and e-mailed inquiries from around the world.

For friends and relatives of the dead, the staff provides free services such as locating the plots, giving travel information and finding nearby accommodations.

They also offer photographs of headstones and engravings, and arrange for floral decorations to be placed on the graves and memorial area.

Texas said too many families have had the chance to visit their dead who are buried here because of distance and the high cost of traveling from the US.

The missing

The cemetery also memorializes 36,285 missing whose names are inscribed in the large marble altar located at the center of the cemetery as well as those who sleep in unknown graves.

Rome played host recently to a group of Guamanian scientists from Marianas who are trying to identify the more than 1,700 "unknown soldiers" who are buried in the cemetery. The group has so far identified four.

How he got the job

The superintendent testified how he wanted to be a park ranger when he was a boy. After his Army discharge, he worked as a private citizen. In 1989, he stumbled on an ad of the American Battle Monuments Commission, the US federal agency in charge of overseeing and maintaining memorial shrines and cemeteries honoring US soldiers killed in foreign countries.

"I played my curiosity, especially in aviation, taking view of America's war dead overseas," he said.

Assignments

His first assignments was at the small US military cemetery in the village of Luxem, in Luxembourg, which had 5,000 graves. He later served as caretaker in American cemeteries in Normandy in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. He was posted to the Philippines in May 2002.

Rome tookes in charge of WWII burials encompassing Angaur, Northern Marianas, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, and Guamanian City in Nueva Ecija, Philippines.

The Nueva Ecija monument honores a "wall of honor" memorializing the site of a prisoner-of-war camp where 3,000 US soldiers died while in captivity.

Biggest number of US soldiers

The Manila cemetery is only the second largest in area of the cemeteries memorializing the service of US soldiers overseas. But it has the biggest number of soldiers interred and memorialized.

The cemetery lies on a prominent plateau, visible from a distance. The gently rising ground, covered with tropical trees and shrubbery, culminates in the cemetery memorial.

Most of the buried and memorialized soldiers lost their lives in the epic defense of the Philippines and the Pat Base in 1941 and 1942 and in the operations to turn of the US forces through the vast Pacific island chain.

The Philippine government ceded the land for the establishment of the memorial in April 1948 to the then post US military reservation known as Fort William McKinley. Designed by Gardner A. Dailey, it was completed in 1960.

Rome said his mission is to ensure that the cemetery maintains and meets the highest standards as a living memorial to fallen soldiers on whose behalf families had dedicated the care of their loved ones to his members.

'They deserve no less'

"It's keeping the memory of the valor and sacrifice that was paid by these men and women. That's why we are expanding so high because the public deserves it as a sacrifice has these soldiers who are interred here deserve nothing but the best," he said.

He said he often gets asked by visitors, particularly young people, if there are ghosts in the cemetery.

"I've never experienced anything paranormal. I always say you never have to fear the dead. It's always the living you have to fear," he said.

Tourist destination

The American cemetery is listed in the tourism department's list of tourist attractions in Manila. Rome said 66,000 people visited the cemetery last year, mostly from Japan, China and other Asian countries.

"We do get lots of Filipinos, but it's not like, 'I'm tired but I'd tourist spend to visit a cemetery.' I think it has something to do with the culture," he said, while also noting that Filipinos customarily troop to the cemeteries on All Souls Day to pay their respects to the dead.

The cemetery is open daily to the public from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., service days a week and no special passes are required.

Lawmaker wants to hike taxes . . .

From page A1

30 percent excise tax on luxury goods and services ranging from perfumes and yachts to automatic and body enhancement procedures.

"Given the current fiscal crisis, the government needs a more cohesive way of increasing fiscal base which will not be detrimental to the poorly-served of society," Biton explained in his bill.

HB 3651 targets perfumes, yachts and "other vessels intended for pleasure and sports."

It includes "other goods with any of the following qualities: unique, rare, valuable by association, made of expensive metals or of exquisite design, customs-made or with exceptional features, and created by well-known or renowned company."

The bill covers cosmetic and body enhancement procedures like liposuction, breast reduction, hair removal and the like.

Anticipating howls of protest from people who may want a nip-n-tuck, or perhaps a booty like J. Lo, Biton argued that taxing these goods and services would "enhance the progressivity of the tax system because the tax burden is borne by those who are able to pay."

Non-essentials

He said imposing taxes on non-essential goods and services was not limited to the Philippines.

"All over the world today, the tax base is being redefined, broadened and enlarged to capture the ever-changing behavior and lifestyle of people in businesses and governments," Biton said.

He noted that economic enhancements reviews are later out to keep up to designer clothes, limited, political powers or billboards tax rates "already being considered globally."

The Mitra bill seeks to empower the Department of Finance to come up with a comprehensive listing of non-essential goods and services subject to excise tax.

"The list shall be reviewed and revised annually," he said.

He said essential goods, the bill provides for a 10 percent tax on the wholesale price or value of importation.

Non-essential services will be levied a tax equivalent to 20 percent of gross receipts.

Exemptions

In a statement, Biton clarified that the bill would exempt certain cosmetic procedures needed in medical reconstructive surgery to address skin flaw, extraordinary attributes or medical aids such as hearing aids.

Also exempted are procedures for life-threatening cases like the removal of cancerous tumors.

"The guy he's having are not covered [by the tax] but here exemptions are, even if a person insisted that he would die of shame for being bald," Mitra said.

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LRT fare hike a must, says DOTC

By Cherkis S. Bolino

METRO Manila's railway systems need a P10-fare hike badly, according to Secretary Leandro Mendoza of the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC).

He said the DOTC had endorsed the fare hike to the Finance and Budget departments.

These two departments must agree to the proposal before the National Economic and Development Authority headed by President Macapagal-Arroyo could approve the fare increase.

If it is any consolation, the Metro Rail Transit Line 3 (MRT3) ran the proposed minimum fare to P16 from P17. Its current minimum fare remains at P9.00.

But the proposed fare hike from North Edsa to Baclaran remains at P30, which still tops the current fare from P15 to P25.

MRT3 general manager Roberto Lastimoso said the government had hoped to implement the fare hike in August. The proposed increase in the fares of the MRT3 as well as the Light Rail Transit (LRT) Lines 1 and 2 have been pending since March.

LRT2 operator Sumi mass to operations last Friday. The opening of the 12th station, from Pasig should increase the passenger count daily to about 520,000 from the current volume of about 500,000.

The LRT-2 fare ranges from P-12 to P16 while LRT-1 collects a flat rate of P15.

Mendoza said the government was also balancing the need to raise revenue to maintain the operations of the railway with the capacity of commuters to absorb the fare increase.

Close to 800,000 commuters ride the MRT-3, LRT-1 and LRT-2 everyday.

"We have to consider the economics but however the way rates are increased people will have a hard time, But it would be very difficult to sustain the operations of the railway without the fare increase," said Mendoza.

The train authorities shoulder increased costs of maintenance, particularly of the electricity that runs the train systems. Power accounts for about 30 percent of the railway system's operation expenses.

Income from operating the railway, according to government sources, is not enough to cover the costs of maintenance.

Lastimoso said the government had no other means of collecting additional income as a private consortium collected the rentings from advertisements within the MRT-3 premises.

3 more fires hit Metro

TWO WOMEN were injured in one of three fires that hit three cities of the metropolis yesterday.

Malabon arson investigators identified the victims as Evelyn Aquino, 45, and Edelsa Baldoza, 40, owners of a two-story house that burned down on Crispin Street, Barangay Tonsuya.

Some 10 families were rendered homeless in the three-hour blaze that started at 3 a.m.

In Pandacan, an overheated electric fan caused an hour-long fire at the Neighborhood Association Compound on Switzerland Street, Barangay was placed at P200,000.

Kadiza, on Friday evening, the BFSE says party store in the corner of 910 Pajo and Evelio Street in Pasay City went up in flames and resulted in damages estimated at P500,000.

The causes of the fires in Malabon and Pasay still being determined as of press time. Nino G. Santos and Nancy C. Carvajal

LABA-LABA-DOO! Fireman wash their uniforms and equipment on the street across the Makati City Central Fire Station early Saturday with water from a fire hydrant.

Watchmen in Blanca case: Who is hiding?

By Connie B. Bikoy Jr.

MORE of the security guards in the murder case of actress Blanca Rivera are in hiding.

"We have always been ready to cooperate in the investigation," Inspector Rolando Lim, owner of the Northern Isabela Security Agency (NISA), said yesterday.

Lim called up the reporters to help explain that his three men—Roberto Calixto, Ricky Ines Bendez an earlier reported) Alvarez and Eladio Medina—were avoiding a new probe.

"We can called up the agency to asked about the guards before arrest that they had gone missing, even me," Lim said, adding that he and the three watchmen had given their full cooperation from the start.

In fact, he added, had anyone called their office, he could have readily presented Alvarez, who still works for the agency.

Lim said Calixto and Medina did not return their licenses to security guards, so they were no longer with NISA.

Calixto, he disclosed, was already working as a collector for Tandang Sora Liquefied Petroleum Gas, Quezon City.

According to Lim, Calixto has called him and expressed readiness to face a new probe.

Lim said he was not aware of the whereabouts of Medina but the security agency was already trying to locate him.

If he were here, Lim announced reports linking his with Rivera's estate presented to the operations of NISA.

"She is not connected with the security agency. I was told upon arrival," he said.

6/42 Lotto Vis-Min
6 19 38 36 38 40
EZ2 SUERTRES SIX DIGIT
20 15 6 5 3 7 0 2 8 5 3

METRO
Editor Ester G. Olpoquil ■ Assoc. Editor Corazon B. Silva

'CONDOS' FOR THE DEPARTED

The dead get better accommodations

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Thera V. Quimsonido

ONLINE most people who still have to brave heavy traffic and endure their way into crowded cemeteries, businessmen Claro Santos, 48, and her family will probably pass stop home tomorrow.

Her father died five years ago. His body was cremated after the wake and the ashes were placed in a niche.

In 2003, she bought a vault for her father's remains at a columbarium in Quezon City. A few days ago, she had the vault opened so she could take her father's remains and bring them home.

She plans to return the urn of his ashes' tiny.

Talk about returning burial practices.

Boxes, vaults and niches

Instead of tombs, a columbarium has small boxes built on room walls. These boxes, called vaults or niches, contain urns filled with a person's cremated remains.

Although the practice began hundreds of years ago in Europe, it is only now that Filipinos are burning their dead in columbaria.

The apprehension could be partly due to religion.

The Catholic Church had prohibited cremation until 1963.

Now, religious orders in the country are the pioneers in building columbaria, particularly in Metro Manila.

The Inquisitorian Fathers and a private developer now have The Columbarium in Ghetsemani City, which houses 21,600 vaults. The project is almost 70 percent complete.

Vincentians, too

The Vincentian Fathers have also started the construction of the Santuario de San Vicente de Paul Shrine and Columbarium, also in Quezon City. It will have 9,000 niches.

Amid the final rites, developers present the columbarium as a practical alternative to traditional burial.

It's a fit

It is said for keeping the ashes of those cremated cost P19,000 to P100,000.

At the same time, the price of a vault ranges from P5,000 to 90,000, depending on the location.

On the other hand, a vacant lot in a memorial garden and the requisite service of a tomb or a mausoleum will cost more than P100,000.

No fee, no renewals

There will be no monthly fees for maintenance, nor will there be a need to renew the contract. The Columbary manager Lit Reyes said.

In public cemeteries, contracts last for only five years.

Reyes' company even offers columbarium installment plans, ranging from P8000 to P3,500 monthly, payable in three years.

According to her, this should disprove the idea that cremation and columbaria are only for rich families.

GETTING ready for the flood of people visiting to remember their dearly departed, Mayor Lito Atienza and his son, Councilor Kim Atienza, tour the city's niches and vaults in a soon-to-be-opened section of the North Cemetery (MA NACU)

Aside from brave souls, maintaining vaults for relatives who have passed away is also more convenient, Reyes said.

Unlike in cemeteries, columbaria usually have 24-hour memory guards and reservations.

The vaults can also be opened from time to time, so family members can bring home their dearly departed's remains on special occasions.

And because columbaria are usually constructed under churches or chapels, the dead are literally brought back to the house of their Creator, Sinduan in the San Vicente de Paul Shrine and Columbarium project director Fr. Arliano Sipacio said.

The rise of the columbarium is not new in the country. Some prisons during the Spanish times were enclosed and their ashes kept under churches.

However, it was only recently that this practice was "commercialized," Sipacio said.

"I think in the next 10 years, (the columbarium) will be acceptable to (Filipinos)," he added.

More acceptance

There is also a growing number of Filipinos who prefer cremation over a traditional burial, despite the objections of The Columbary said it is purely local.

The developers said that in the next six years, 20 percent of Metro Manila residents will have cremations.

But University of the Philippines anthropology department head Michael Tan believes the process of acceptance will be slow.

"There will be a lot of resistance," he said.

Tan said residents in congested cities might be open to cremation, but those in rural areas would cling to their traditional practices.

He lashed to the resurrection of the body as taught by the Church, will also make it difficult for some Filipinos to let the bodies of their loved ones be reduced to ashes.

Bowing to the columbarium model also displace the culture of going to the cemeteries on All Saints' Day, a tradition many Filipinos may not be ready to abandon.

For those who may choose to have their remains placed in columbaria, the city of Manila will soon be offering similar "accommodations" for the dead at the North Cemetery.

"Condominium-type" buildings for the departed are under construction on 4.6 hectares of the cemetery, a project that would take the commonly known "apartment" type one step higher.

The Manila North Green Park is in the works inside the city-owned cemetery on the corner of Blumentritt and Andres Bonifacio Street in Sta. Cruz.

It will be a sprawling, 126-building complex of multi-level crypts that may house ashes, skeletal remains or coffins.

Joint venture

A joint venture between the city government and private developer CBC Development Corporation, Inc., the project will be completed in five years during which 14 building clusters or 2.8 hectares will be built.

"The private sector would take care of the development and maintenance of the surrounding, in exchange for letting them use public land," said Mayor Lito Atienza.

The new burial facility shows the main entrance of the 54-hectare North Cemetery whose grass were recently replaced to give the illusion of the trees and a lower memorial park.

The buildings would house 67,200 coffin crypts and 22,000 loose urns—smaller ones that can hold up to four skeletons or ash urns.

Two clusters of three-story buildings, each level having five layers of crypts, will be built. The rest would rise to ten stories, with a total of 14 crypt layers.

A main road would be carved around the building clusters and their parking lots. Walkways would be installed on each level of the crypt buildings, where families may offer candles and flowers on their departed loved ones.

Ongoing project manager Patrick Corpuz said that the plan also covers sanitary concrete, or an underground sealed vault, would be constructed to collect "cadaver juices" using a drainage path through the multi-level crypts.

How about the living?

The project began as families of the cemetery's thousands of caretakers faced the imminent loss of their homes. The buildings would occupy the present site of their homes.

"What would happen to the workers? They have nowhere else to go, and they have been living there for a long time," said Chai Hernanes, spokesperson of Kilusgonan ng Mga untong Pilipino at Bandjas (KMPP), which learned about the project through some of their members who lived in the cemetery.

Hernanes said that while the families living there were indeed informal dwellers, they have considered the cemetery their home for generations.

The informal group counted some 3,000 cemetery cleaners, informal cemetery workers and their families living in a portion of the public cemetery.

Relocation planned

"They were informed of the plan and given advance notice. But I don't think that would be a problem," said Corpuz, confident that City Hall would take care of the informal dwellers.

Asked what would happen to the families that would eventually have to give way to the construction of multi-level crypts, Atienza said their relocation was being planned.

ULR began conversations last month with members of the caretakers with City Hall, which at least chose to undertake the project under a build-operate-transfer scheme.

The private firm aims to finish construction within three to five years, as they would have to turn over the facility to City Hall in between five to seven years.

"We are hoping to open crypts for interment by December or January," Corpuz said.

Based on CBC's marketing leaflet, coffin crypts would be sold for P17,500. All while loose crypts are priced at P12,750. Payments may be made in cash or on an installment basis.

Once the crypts are sold out, the 67,000 coffin crypts stand to yield P846 million, while the 22,000 loose crypts may take in an income of P280 million.

Islamic prayer room withstands opposition

By Luige B. del Puerro

CONSTRUCTION of the Islamic prayer room on the ground floor of a parking building at the Greenhills Shopping Center continues undeterred despite mounting opposition from homeowners' associations in surrounding areas.

Muslim traders at the shopping center vaguely await the opening of their prayer room, as remodeled, scheduled for Nov. 10.

"Our information is that the prayer room will be opened on Nov. 10. If not, then before Nov. 14, the last day of the Ramadan," Nur Dimaporo, secretary general of the Greenhills Muslim Traders Association, said over the phone.

Muslims celebrate the last day of the Ramadan, called Eid Al-Fitr, with a feast, and Qiyigan and Co. intends that the celebration take place at the Muslims' new, air-conditioned prayer room, Dimaporo said.

"The Center has allowed the construction to be finished soon, and we would only thank Him," Dimaporo added.

He said Qiyigan and Co. had repeatedly assured Muslim traders that the construction of the prayer room would go on unhampered.

So far, people could see for themselves that work on the parking area, where the mandlah is to be housed, continues, he said.

Nonetheless, opposition to the establishment of the prayer room has not died down.

The North Greenhills Association circulated a newsletter this week reiterating that the "main issue" to the controversy is peace and order—not religion.

The association is aggressively lobbying against the prayer room, arguing that whenever mosques are built, the area quickly deteriorates in terms of land values and security.

Yet on Sunday night, some Greenhills residents virtually ordered their association's officials to resolve the issue.

At least 30 residents met in an "emergency meeting" to discuss and vote on their resolutions, according to Francisco Joaquin, former chair and president of the association.

While the residents did not move to put forward a categorical statement of support for the prayer room, those who favor it have scored big psychologically.

On the surface, the three-storey structure is aggressively debated that residents are deeply divided on the issue, and a number have reservations about the association's stand on the controversy.

Joaquin supports the establishment of the prayer room and calls the association's stand as an act of "bigotry" and "religious intolerance."

The first three resolutions are summarized as follows:

■ The Board of Directors may not approve requests for matters of religious belief, including the Islamic prayer room controversy.

■ The association may not use its funds in the filing of any case decided by the Board on a religious issue.

■ As officer or member may speak on a religious issue only in his or her personal capacity, and not on behalf of residents.

Manila docs to give free hernia operations

By Leila B. Salaverria

AMID the rising prices of gasoline and other basic goods, some things still come free—even if only for a while.

The Capital ng Maynila's Department of Surgery has announced that it will be operating on children with hernia for free in November.

Herwia, known locally as *luslos*, is a condition wherein part of the intestine bulges through a weak area of muscles in the abdomen.

The condition usually affects the groin area in males who experience a lump near their genitals.

Dr. Red Roque, a senior resident at the Department of Surgery, said "Operation Luslos Libre" aims to provide free medical-surgical service to patients.

"The project intends to deliver quality surgical care to indigent patients," he said in a statement sent to the media.

The operation will be done in cooperation with the Give a Life Foundation.

Roque said that so far, six hernia patients are scheduled to undergo free surgery.

Those who wish to inquire about the project may contact Dr. Roque through the Capital ng Maynila's Department of Surgery at 524-6061 loc. 1313 or 310-

BY A NOSE | Marion Constant's Pyramid Relmarch (7) leads by a scant nose to Super Hero (5) as he bids Chairjuan de Maida Jr. to win the Sunday at the San Lazaro Leisure Park. Pyramid Relmarch, a 2-year-old filly owned by Rhozzara out of Rewards, is a full sister to Shining Pyramid, winner of the 2002 Juvenile Fillies Championship opening leg.

Esguerra gallopers SLR Cup favorites

By Edwin Villanueva, Correspondent

REVVED up by a runner-up finish a week ago, Next Laurel teams up with Royal Catch when they try to capture the Sto. Lucia Realty Cup today at the Santa Ana Park.

The 3-2 Hermie Esguerra entrants are expected to gang on top grids tussle because of their convincing canning at the 1,600-meter trip.

Royal Catch, to be handled by ace rider Eric Dilema, is expected to get to the lead early on in the absence of other listed speedballs, while Next Laurel may join Royal along and then put up a big run in the stretch.

"Pag pinabayaan nila 'to sa kanyapan may nalig sila. If they allow her to set the pace, they may be caught flat-footed," said Dilema on Royal Catch, a four-legging 5-year-old roan mare who drew the favorable stall No. 1.

On the other hand, Next Laurel appears to be ready to get back to the winner's enclosure since her impressive victory in the PSLA Cup last May.

"Nagtiitibay kasi yung pagkakasanayan niya last week. Siguro kailangan lang niyang ng first-second-place finish last week served as a good tune-up. I think she's ready to win again," said Jesse Guce on Next Laurel, the 5-year-old mare who landed second to Bandanera in the Rich Dyo Ascia de Manila Goddess Girl Stakes last Oct. 24 at San Lazaro.

Posing threats to Esguerra's entries are an off Rose and Lord of All, first-and-second placers, respectively, in the recent Philippine Classic, as well as battle-tested Lyonnais. Completing the race are Glamour and Moments.

Veterans Jose Elicanary and Rolefino de Vera retained their rides on top of Rose and Lord of All while Elpidio Aguila will be back to steer Lyonnais. Arlo Cardino partners Glamour while Arliel Zuarte mounts Moments.

Esguerra's other horses are also tipped to perform creditably in the other featured events.

Dream-and-Steal Boss are battling Silver Bound and Bring. Three in the La Mirada Mile, while Manager and Crystal Shoes are headlining the race in the Wind Subscapers Mile. Regina takes part in the Glenview Special. Skiller sees action in the Presidential Heights Special, while Sugar Ray, the former Black Gold, vies to end down a long-sought win when he runs in the Orchard Special.

Dilema is also guiding Oasis, Crystal Throw, Regina and Sugar Ray, while Gene skippers Royal Dyna and Moments. Ronald Baldonado will ride for Angeline Lagunero on Hellyn.

The event is jointly hosted by the Philippine stable clubs Sonoro Ishig, Philippine Racing Club and Sto. Lucia Realty and Dev. Corp.

PHILRACING TIPS

Race 1—1. Super Boy 2. Answer Horse 3. Valued Treat Look-A-Love

Race 2—1. Bonny Miss 2. Fortune 3. Shamrock Miss 4. Grande Venture

Race 3—1. Flash 2. Perfect Score 3. Hyperlink

Race 4—1. Dizzy Lily 2. Sky Heart 3. Laughing Waltz

Race 5—1. Cocoa Cinema 2. Hot Mistress 3. Mahara

Race 6—1. Saffron 2. Spring Jewelry 3. Wise Son Jay 4. Tiger Song

Race 7—1. Lotto Prominent 2. Grandeur 3. Frank L. Jones of Sunday's Child Star

Race 8—1. Royal Candidate Lovely 2. Lucenzo 3. Lord of All 4. Moments

Race 9—1. Ocean Castle 2. Endeavor 3. Speed Unlimited 4. Ocean Breeze

Race 10—1. Angel's Star 2. Heavenhope 3. Superstar 4. Clever Choice 5. Tiger Sweet

Race 11—1. Whirlpool Crystal Shoes 2. Crystal Sky 3. Jesse A. Guce Jr. Sugar

Race 12—1. Sea O' Wind Diamond

Race 13—1. Double Bonus 2. Blessings Hall 3. Epic Energy 4. Cruiser Boy 5. Sea Side Crush

Race 14—1. Magic Dollar 2. Merry Prince 3. Diamond Cinema 4. Impeccable Princess 5. Golden Bible 6. Grand Sea Ring

Tolentino, Unabia clinch Osaka 10-K

TWO JOCKEYS from Bacolod scored the honeymoon crowd when they emerged champions of the elite 10-kilometer Open division of the 5th Osaka Ganda Intramurals Run yesterday.

Queen City International Run champion Jaffrey Tolentino of Cooperative Dev and Arnold Unabia (31 minutes 11 seconds) of Tangub City took commanding routes to claim the championship trophy and the top purse of P5,000.

Tolentino was standing forcast to breast with Christy Ann Mesa of University of Cebu when the latter suffered stomach cramps and had to stop temporarily to recover his form to prod Jaffrey Mantal University.

The paved the way for Tolentino and another Cebuano, Little Jo-

seph Cristobal, to get the edge.

Lumiano Gutierrez finished second for a prize of P2,000 and Jovillano, the defending champion, dropped to third place for P1,000.

An athletic coach of the Tangub City government, Unabia joined second to Rosario Montevillo in the same race in 2000. Yesterday, he exacted revenge as Montevillo dropped to third place with second-place honors going to Joseph Jovillano (32 mins 20 secs) of Bohol.

In the 5-km race, Sandra Ann Lubay of Saint Alphonsus College of Lapu-Lapu City overthrown his domination. A 5-gold winner in the recent Hilo Little Olympics meet at the Cebu City Sports Center, Lubay was followed by Anna Mangga and Michael Magpayo.

Business Features Editor Margie Quiniquini-Espino

Dad and lola gave him ingredients for success

By Margie Quiniquini-Espino

PIONEERING and must-be-early spirit to work hard runs in Dennis Pedro's blood but the late young Pedro's mother left him brains and experience—not only that.

BEFORE Pedro family, the boys had members who try to get hold into business.

So to business were Cecilio K. Pedro, who eventually made a name for himself by pulling out Filipino toothpaste, the first to be manufactured by a Filipino company.

Pedro competed in an arena where the players were multinationals with huge cash kitties for advertising.

He, on the other hand, was just a small entrepreneur who dared to dream big.

Pedro says his father did not ask him to work in the family business, as many Chinese sire want to do.

Pedro instead went on the route to self-employment. But his father pointed him.

He started when he was in high school at the Hope Christian High School in the late '50s.

He borrowed a few hundred pesos from his father to buy stock of ballpens, which he sold to his classmates.

It did not take long for him to lose his money and goods, because he sold on credit. Nobody paid him back.

That experience taught him an important lesson: "Credit is good but I need cash."

He shelved his entrepreneurial visions and focused on his studies, eventually getting a degree in management from the Ateneo de Manila University.

Enticed by his first father, he went into business once more, setting up a hardware store along Abenue Street, Manila with a classmate.

Competition was so tough that the headmart had to offer long repayment periods, just to make a sale.

This put a strain on their finances, thus, they decided to shift to manufacturing in the late '70s.

He and a couple of friends went to Japan to look for opportunities, and came upon a company selling plastic equipment.

The equipment made aluminum tubes used by toothpaste makers of the time.

He believed in the prospects enough that he borrowed P10,000 from his parents to buy the equipment.

Then, on July 14, 1977, Aluminum Container Inc. was born. He was just, it had no business.

The time was spent knocking on the doors of businessmen offering their facilities.

These included the Philippine Refining Co. (now called Unilever) and Colgate-Palmolive Phils.

"We were year we had no business. Every week I was talking to their purchasing and packaging development officers," Pedro recalls.

Finally, he was given a small order. And the orders came from there.

"It's really like that in business. Sabungan mahirap ka. Dito kaya to persevere," he says.

In 1981, his partner decided to pursue other interests but Pedro continued on with the company. Aluminum Container did well for almost 16 years, but in 1986, new corporate direction ended a decade of Pedro's hard work.

The aluminum-tube factory decided to stop using aluminum tubes and shifted to laminated plastic tubes.

While 99 percent of their business centered on toothpaste, and with lots of aluminum tubes left in their hands, Pedro had no choice but to close shop in early 1986.

For almost two years, Pedro's factory was closed.

"I was 33 years old and I was planning my life. I recalled the story of the founder of Colgate who was a Christian and he was selling toothpaste," he says.

The Colgate founder was getting 90 percent of his earnings by selling.

Christian since he was young, Pedro says he prayed and asked if this was what God wanted.

(GO TO B3)

FIRST JOB

"My hobby example. He would be at work by 8 a.m. and come home at 7:30," recalls Pedro of his dad's routine.

He continued that with the Christian values he learned about his grandmother to become the businessman he is today.

PHOTO at left shows Cecilio Pedro (seated in the middle) with his high school friends at the Hope Christian High School, Batch 1971. Right photo shows the same group, arranged in the same positions, 30 years later. All became successful.

WT-i
SENSE THE MOVEMENT
The best Altis just got better...
1.8G 4-cylinder in-line, DOHC, 16-Valve
And better.
And better.
And better.
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SM's Tessie Sy makes Fortune's list of most powerful women

TERESITA Sy, eldest daughter of tycoon Henry Sy, made Fortune Magazine's list of 50 most powerful women in business outside the US, for the second consecutive year.

Sy first landed the list last year where she ranked No. 45. This year she fell two notches to No. 47.

She is the only Filipina on the list and one of only four from Southeast Asia. The three others from the region are from Singapore.

The write-up set by names the "crazy rich Asians" heir father Henry's rates for local Hawaiian chain, but don't proving that list will be the benchmark of family empire SM Prime Holdings is at least the equal of her wily octogenarian dad. With by 10 malls across the archipelago, SM Prime, under Sy's hand, seems to keep on growing. Profits this year are expected to top $80 million, on revenue of $2 billion, fueled by a resurgent Filipino economy and Sy's addition of four more malls to the portfolio. Next year's goal: the company's biggest expansion yet—three more complexes, including one that will become the group's flagship, the 4.3 million-square-foot Mall of Asia." Mitsuko Ty Espinosa

To lend to learned in the Dec. 15 issue of Fortune. It the top post is Anne Lauretano, who chairs Avon, the world's largest mother power company. She ranked No. 3 last year.

SM GROUP of companies president Teresita Sy Coson

At the No. 2 spot is Sir Ojkus, chair and president of Shanghai Baosteel Group, who ranked No. 14 last year.

No. 3 is Marjorie Scardino, CEO of Boston, who ranked No. 1 last year.

Former world banker now banks on organic vinegar

By Ernie Ernesto Guerra
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

THANKS to the clone of the virgin coconut oil (VCO), the coconut is enjoying a revival in fortunes.

The VCO is said to have various health benefits ranging from skin treatment to weight loss to helping fight serious diseases like the dreaded Immune Deficiency Syndrome and the severe acute Respiratory Syndrome.

But for those who live in the provinces, the coconut has long been appreciated for more of life.

For the coconut-rich Bicol region, the left-overs coconut fuel, with most still thin and soft, is believed to help in room a meat's moisture richness.

The water inside the fruit is also helpful in dousing the meat's heat.

Dying art

After, farmers used to make a native drink from the coconut sap called "tuba," which is collected by clipping the stem that contains flowers and bole cocoons and putting a collection receptacle where the sap will run into.

Tuba used to be the staple in sports and social gatherings, but gathering it has now become an almost extinct art and the tuba-drinking culture has turned more become of commercialized drinking.

Tuba can also be turned into vinegar so it can be put to an earthen jar and be naturally fermented.

For Linda Conejar, owner of Sunlegna Food Enterprises, makers of Lola Goodbeg sour native organic vinegar, the sales and the vinegar she loved from it have been part of her life.

Her mother, Lola Goodbeg, now 83, used to sweet freshly gathered tuba as an organic alcoholic drink to a small bar. But they had in Bulan town, Sorsogon, their hometown, to help their father raise her and her brothers.

Lola Goodbeg would print the unconsumed tuba, which could no longer be drank, in earthen jars and allow it to ferment naturally.

World of vinegar

"I lived in the world of vinegar. We never got used to using vinegar aside from the one from tuba," Conejar says.

So when she retired in 1999 from the International Rice Research Inst., the private sector one of the World Bank lenders, she naturally gravitated to manila coconut-related business.

At first she enrolled in an agency course at the University of the Philippines in Los Baños and with the encouragement of some of her friends, she told her that the thousands of the coconut tree are among the major sources of income, she had a boundless income with a total of 40 hectares honeydews.

Lola Goodbeg because the tuba cost a hundred on beekeeper, all her honeybees died, along with her investments.

Organic

Finally, with the suggestion of her husband Ernesto, which is the Quezon town of Agos from organic vinegar making, the venture into a families had organic coconut vinegar making.

Conejar also joined the Organic Producer Trade Association (Opta) to learn more about the organic food industry and built a processing plant in Sariaya, Pilipinas, Bulan.

The Bureau of Food and Drugs granted her a license to operate on Nov. 28, 2002.

Now she has trained a 10-5 hectare farm in Bulan into an organic agricultural and aquaculture farm.

Coconut trees are planted in mixed Pan Borneo, where four tuba gatherers are assigned 30 coconut trees each to collect from.

"After gathering the tuba, we never cure its sugar content in our factory; it is passes the required level, it is put in a food-grade container for a maximum of 45 to 60-day fermentation period," Conejar says.

When the required acidity level is achieved, the vinegar is then filtered, pasteurized and then bottled depending on the customer's preference.

Product variety

Lola Goodbeg's vinegar comes in variety: in 750-ml bottles, virgin (unfiltered, unpasteurized) sells for P90, with raw wild honey, P175; with lemon grass, P90; with garlic, P90, with chili and ginger, P90.

In 350-ml bottles, classic with the P90; virgin, P90; with lemon, P90; with lemon grass, P45; with garlic, P90; with chili and ginger, P90.

The vinegar can be used for cooking, salad dressing, dipping, marinating and pickling, and requires only a refrigerator small amount when used in dressing.

Conejar says she usually delivers her products in organic and health stores in Manila, either through consignment or cash basis.

One of her store, she says, is to help organic growers implement in chemically treated food.

As the Green & Determined (G&D) Organic Haven located at 424-E E. Rodriguez Ave., Quezon City, the most popular is the cheese variety because of its mouthwatering aroma, according to the owner's three managers Jacob Tagbos. Among the three customers' uses for the cheese, Tagbos says, are as salad dressing, a way to spice up their "sinigang," or salmon. Lola for apple cider vinegar and for body detoxification.

"I have tested exhibits and testimonies, that one way or another, your product is being recognized in the market," Conejar says.

Two BIAD-recognized laboratories—the Food Development Center of the National Food Authority and the ILSI Philippines Inc., have found the vinegar's preponderants exhibited number high, indicative of the purity of the product.

Beta carotene, calcium, iron, sodium, phosphorous, magnesium and high potassium content were also found in the coco vinegar.

Foreign market

Ironically, foreigners noticed her product more than Filipinos did.

"It's difficult in the sense that not all Filipinos appreciate organic products yet. They would always compare your product with the corn organic ones. The tendency is for them to buy the cheaper ones," she pointed out.

Aside from domestic customers, who patron conditioned and organic-oriented ones virgins, Lola ordered notes from her in Asia and Indonesia.

A prospective client, who is into Filipino food, dish Italian in California, New York, New Jersey and San Francisco, has expressed interest to her products.

A prospective European client has asked for another laboratory test to confirm the presence of a certain component in the coco vinegar before making an order.

"I think there still is infancy stage when it comes to the appreciation of organic foods. They're already advance in the US, Europe and Japan," Conejar noted.

"I'm still praying for my pores to figure out a selling rate that I can make because although I've seen [in the local store] I have already exported my product," she added.

When asked why she did not venture into the VCO business trend, she said, "I have no plans of going into virgin coconut oil [business], they're already too many there. I would rather help develop other products that are unique related."

After all, she says, she grew up in the midst of vinegar.

LO-LOH...foreigners have bought more organic vinegar than Filipinos.

Volunteerism keeps 'bayanihan' spirit alive

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

IN THE olden days, neighbors would happily hoist a family's bahay kubo on their shoulders and carry it to its new location in true bayanihan spirit.

The modern version of just the community's wishes that the relocating family would do well in its new locale.

Companies and organizations strive to keep that bayanihan tradition alive by encouraging their employees to lend time, effort and a little money to charitable programs in the areas of environment, education, health and entrepreneurship.

One of these is HSBC Philippines, whose volunteerism is a way of life for its employees, starting from CEO Marnie Manning.

Manning encourages, for instance, will Bank's program of HSBC employees selling items, leading a science experiment or conducting story drills in HSBC's first READiscovery centers.

The READiscovery pilot sites at Edsaway Elementary School, Libis Elementary School, Alabang Elementary School and Marcela Agoncillo Elementary School provides these staff-for school children access to the latest in children's books, audio-visual equipment, computers, toys, puzzles and games to inspire creativity and shared learning.

By lending their time, HSBC employees maximize the benefits of the READiscovery centers for the good of the children. At the same time, they put a more useful twist to their Saturday mornings, which would have been otherwise spent just shopping or going to some playtime.

They not only help the public school students' teachers learn more, employees also get to know their own home better, feeling much better about themselves.

HSBC assistant vice president Lolita Santiago adds that as many as 40 HSBC employees also join in "diversity workbenches," where they get the chance to involve themselves in projects of the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement and the Dagong Bayanihan and Conservation Project.

They come at length their own expense, but employees see it as an investment in knowledge in environmental preservation, one of the bank's pet causes.

Protecting the environment is also a major concern of the employees of oil refinery Petron Corp.

Every year, Petron employees take part in Earth's Hour at Dagat, the coastal cleanup of the shorelines of Bataan, where Petron's refinery is located.

Volunteerism helps pick up trash, saves as does members, assist the medical team or help disseminate information.

Employees also participate in reforestation efforts by buying mangrove seedlings and planting them in land and coastal habitats, in cooperation with national and local agencies.

Petron volunteers likewise join school and home visits to check up on the progress of some 1,000 indigent children in 98 schools that Petron put up through its "Bulong Isulat ng Petron program, in particular they will the Department of Social Welfare and Education.

There are just shows of 14 major company outreach programs, under the umbrella program of Volunteerism in Action, where collective efforts are nurtured and recognized.

By putting company resources behind these programs through Petron Foundation, the company provides a venue for its employees to make a positive contribution to a better society.

And it's not only the employees and the communities that benefit from these efforts. The companies do, too, even if those are not immediately reflected in the bottom line.

A 2000 study conducted by the Philippine Business for Social Progress, in partnership with the City University of New York and the American Chamber Foundation, showed that employees volunteering builds teamwork and fosters camaraderie.

It also improves a company's relationships with the community leaders, employee morale, increases a company's public image and finally, helps create healthier commercial ties.

Harnessing this employee power, however, takes deliberate and organized effort on the part of the company management and the employees themselves.

Unless it is organized as a company activity, employee volunteer efforts will go the way of many other outreach programs—a mere flash in the pan.

HSBC deputy CEO Martin Cook covers up on a cookie recipe

Dad and lola gave him ingredients . . .

Powered by PDI

ed him to be—the Calgary of the Philippines.

He knew at that time that the only way to get his money going again was to make business confidence in everybody else was shifting to manufacturing.

He looked for a partner who could give him the technology to produce the best quality footwear.

Then he talked to an American bro, then a Japanese. He was tempted just to go in as a sleeping and technology by then time, the biggest world-brands maker in Japan.

He created a new course by the company—Lauretano, which is the Chinese version of his grandmother's maiden name Lim.

Fully aware of the strengths and the of 1990, and Calgary-Philippine, Pedro's strategy was to compete by offering a deeper innovation.

With regards to the distribution, Pedro had to go around himself and to the distributor wise in provinces.

With a limited budget for promotion, he spent wisely and sponsored the 1990 Philippine Olympic Team.

It created tremendous brand awareness which eventually boosted of records.

And since the brand was born in an international venue, most everyone thought Rupert Tantiquen was made by a big company.

Sales of the product went up, and Rupert Footwear became known.

Credit remains a challenged and Pedro had to innovate, even if Rupert to see bigger a small time brand.

He balances his career with his marriage to wife Irene, and his relationship with only one God, who would soon graduate with a Masters top degree from De La Salle University.

Deal-maki 'karen'

One of the unique things about Lauretano is it is one of the companies willing to employ disabled people, particularly the deaf-mute, who account for almost 20 percent of Lauretano's employees.

Pedro has always lived and abided by the words of the Lord: "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, that you do unto me."

Thus, deaf-mutes are provided their own living quarters within the company compound.

Pedro was invited to join the Deaf Evangelical Mission Foundation Inc. (DEAF) a few years ago. It is an organization established to train cases of the deaf-mute and deaf.

DEAF operates a school in Cainta, Laguna where deaf people are given free college education.

In 1993, Pedro was chosen as DEAF chair. He proposes to establish more schools for the deaf in the next few years.

Religious upbringing

The words of God became an important part of Pedro's personality. He proudly states it to his grandchildren who considered religiosity in her family.

"I encounter difficulties because there are things that we can't do and there are things that we won't do. We always comply with the rules. I see to it that all our brands are clean. In fighting the giant companies, there are dirty tricks. But we won't resort to those. We would fight in an honest, legit way. Being a Christian is not easy, we are labeled—killjoy, no chicks, with us. We are trusted more. But we can also share the talent in many ways—directly or indirectly. We can influence other businessmen through our own example," he says.

And how does he sustain his energy today? "We don't have to be very successful. Little successes will be enough because the Lord who made us a success to the first place will schedule little successes to a more humane basis. What is important for me is to share values and contribute to the area around."

More RP homes in remote areas using sun power

By Abigail L. Ho

MAYBE in the tropics has its advantages.

For one, it's easy to get a tan on a hot summer day at the beach.

But more importantly, Filipinos can use the power of that big, burning ball of gas to improve their lives.

This is why the more than Philippine Sun Island Oil Co. embarked on its Solar Power Distribution Project.

Its aim is to bring electricity to far-flung communities at reasonable prices, using solar power.

Power to the people

The project is funded by a 3.39-million-Euro (about P187 million) grant from the Netherlands, plus some counterpart funding from the PNOC.

In keeping with the government's goal of providing electricity to all, even in remotest of far-flung communities, PNOC has so far installed P79.2 million worth of solar home systems in 475 barangays.

These solar power systems will provide electricity to some 3,320 households, mostly situated in remote barangays unserved by traditional power sources.

PNOC president Yolanda Ribdan said the whole project would entail the installation of 15,196 units of solar home systems during its five-year run.

These solar home systems would provide power to barangays in Regions 1-7 and the Cordillera Administrative Region.

Three areas were identified in a market survey that the Department of Energy conducted in 1995, as most in need of the solar panels.

Now in line for installation are areas in the Negros province.

Affordable costs

While the solar home systems being installed under the program do not come for free, households in covered areas can get the power systems at very affordable prices due to the grant and the PNOC subsidy.

For roughly P10,000, a household can already avail itself of the complete solar home system package.

This includes a solar panel, mounting, battery, wiring, lights and other fixtures.

The package also includes free installation and four free maintenance visits within a year of installation.

This may also be treated as a long-term investment as the solar panel alone can last up to 20 years.

Plus, interested households do not have to pay for the package in cash.

They can tap local cooperatives and other financial intermediaries for E-financing schemes with reasonable terms.

They can get soft loans with maturities ranging from 1 year to five years, for example.

For a monthly amortization of only around P400, for instance, a household that will get a solar home system can get rid of regular cash outlays for dry cell batteries and oil lamps, popularly known as the "kalikasan."

Long-term benefits

Ribdan said the installation of just P79.2 million worth of solar home system had already done wonders for beneficiaries in some of the remotest barangays in the country.

"We are proud that we have reached the most remote of the barangays, and with this initiative, we know that these communities are now becoming productive and economically active, given the extended daylight they are now experiencing," he added.

The installation of more solar home systems in the near future, therefore, should further extend the benefits that electricity give to residents of far-flung communities.

Ribdan said the project likewise made the government more creative in thinking of more ways to provide electricity to people living in places not served by the national power grid.

This also supported President Macapagal-Arroyo's call for the development and use of more indigenous power resources, to reduce our dependence on the very volatile fossil fuels.

"This encourages us more to explore ways, source other means, and develop other energy resources so we could reach those impossible-hard-to-reach areas," Ribdan said.

The award is seen as the "Oscar" of the energy industry, the most prestigious.

HOUSEHOLD which uses the solar system of the PNOC

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2GO Express offers 1-3-6 delivery service

2GO, the freight division of Sulpicio Transport System (STS), is now offering express delivery tailored to handle customers' needs outside regularly quick response schedules.

Called 1-3-6, the service allows the customer to have his loose cargo delivered to one, three or six days without having to worry about flight or vessel schedules and in a simplified and cost-effective rate.

"The package is not small, so schedule is too tight for us not to be able to deliver according to our clients' time specifications," STS president and CEO Eddie Sheriza said. "With 1-3-6, we are giving our customers the power to dictate their load plans."

The express delivery comes as part of a new package launching 2GO, the new brand handling STS's cargo operations. The packaging, explained Aboitiz, positions 2GO in the market as a company offering a more integrated and revved up solution to the needs of cargo customers and more efficient.

Aboitiz said that being an archipelago, our country needs an efficient and cost-effective system of goods distribution by air, land and sea so that it can successfully compete globally.

Efficient distribution, according to Aboitiz, is "critical to the continuous flow of supply of the basic necessities of life such as food, drink and shelter as much as luxury products. It makes possible market diversity and consumers' choice thereby driving competitiveness, jobs and progress."

With the express delivery, 2GO hopes to help manufacturing, distribution and marketing companies reduce the time needed to deliver goods from the point of production to the point of consumer contact.

Looking at lead time alone, the actual production itself, according to studies, eats up a mere 10 percent of it.

It is inbound and outbound logistics that account for customers' wasting time. The bulk of operations costs, therefore, is due to the moving and delivering of goods, they said.

NEW Toy Kingdom branch. A new branch of Toy Kingdom opens at SM Makati. It is the 12th station of the toy wars. Photo shows singers Rochelle Anne Go (extra right) and Mark Bautista (not right) with Bartok Jaredilena, Toy Kingdom's Nasa Dy Lee (2nd from left), Cecilia Lo and Eric Lim with little Toy Kingdom customers.

Supermarket chain opens more stores

ROBINSONS Supermarket Corp. (RSC) is set to open six more stores around the country.

To date, nine Robinsons Supermarket branches opened in Rosario Square, Caloocan City on March 31, Robinsons Mall in Virginia, Pampanga on Sept. 17, Grand Easth Mall in Antipolo, Manila on Oct. 1, and Metro Alabang on Oct. 15; Ilumina Complex in Novaliches, Quezon City on Oct. 27 and another branch in Tandang Sora, Quezon City is set to open next month.

The addition of six stores this year brings to 20 the total number of Robinsons Supermarket branches located around the country. There are now 11 branches in Metro Manila, five in Luzon and four in the Visayas.

"We are moving closer to households and reaching more people, letting them experience what Robinsons Supermarket has to offer—shopping convenience, complete product choices, value-for-money merchandise and excellent customer service," says Bonnie T. Ong, general manager and first vice president of Robinsons Supermarket.

Robinsons Supermarket now stores range from 1,000 to 3,000 square meters.

With additional outlets, Robinsons Supermarket brings to more people its 3-in-1 experience, specially improved to make the store the top-of-mind supermarket of choice in the fresh category.

It also focuses on being the provider of low-priced/high-quality products that Filipinos need with its private label, Superstores. The store carries various brands most trusted by the public, affording them more choices and more practical options.

The store's staff ensures that shoppers are properly assisted and their concerns appropriately addressed.

To sustain consumer interest and loyalty, Robinsons Supermarket implements year-round valuable product promotions through tie-ups with its suppliers.

There is the WOW Promotion featuring price chops on favorite items. For new stores, on the other hand, Fresh Extravaganza! Lite, AVP Merchandising says "To every new store, we provide the community special promos like budget packs, regular home service (gift with purchase) and a crazy ads with promo discounts."

Other ongoing promotions include the Sun Bryant Corp. Pencils' Prizes and Pick Tips promo, Yakult Gift Choices, Pow Pro-Christmas Sale from Oct. 29 to Dec. 2, Christmas Fresh Festival starting November and the major Christmas consumer promotion to start this November with over 4 million pesos worth of prizes.

"Our plan is to continue our quest for expansion by supermarket and other formats as well. Hopefully, we would like to target at least five stores for next year. For product lines, we will continue to enhance the supermarket by looking for new synergies and introduce fresh ideas into the supermarket for you," says Ong.

DESPITE 388% TOLL HIKE

Lopez group claims motorists to benefit from NLEX

By Charissa S. Barlizo

MOTORISTS are sure to grumble during the All Saints' Day break as they resort through heavy traffic along the clogged expressways.

Those regularly taking the North Luzon Expressway are likely to raise even more shouting fare this year as costly new toll rates for the new operator of Nlex begins imposing higher toll fees.

Toll along the Nlex are to increase by 388 percent for light vehicles and buses as well as heavy trucks used by 500 percent for light trucks and buses.

Manila North Tollways Corp., a consortium led by Lopez-owned First Philippine Infrastructure Development is taking over the operations of the Nlex after investing $355 million to rehabilitate and modernize the 84-kilometer expressway running from Balintawak to the limit in Pampanga.

MNTC president Jose "Peng" De Jesus who was secretary of Public Works and Highways during the time of President Aquino says that benefits of the new Nlex far outweigh what appears to be a substantial increase in fees.

The consortium that includes state-owned Philippine National Construction Corp., French firm Egis and motorist-conglomerate AIA Gil, has sacrificed to "unsubsidized the road in the interest, added two more lanes on both sides for most part, built three new interchanges, expanded four toll gates, and installed a new monitoring system that includes emergency phone boxes along the highway, improved roadway lighting and digital signs warning of traffic ahead.

Ensuring safety

The phone boxes directly connect with the military operator and don't be used to call home, according to De Jesus. But at least, one won't get stranded and helpless along the Nlex anymore and the 24-hour emergency assistance is now to respond immediately, he says.

De Jesus claims even wasting fees are to drop by half once the construction takes over. The base fee of P1,500 for entering should go down to $0 percent.

The PNCC says about 150,000 motorists pass through the North expressway daily. This number should increase to 160,000 after MNTC takes over.

The MNTC chief says a study conducted by EDSA Consult, which the group had commissioned, showed that taking the new Nlex is cheaper even with the higher toll fees compared to when the PNCC was charging lower but the road condition was poor.

Vehicle operating costs

He says there is such a thing as vehicle operating costs or Voc which factors in gas consumption and vehicle wear and tear, especially of parts like tires and batteries.

De Jesus believes this should be compared with the toll fee to give a complete picture of the costs and benefits of traveling using the expressway.

Cars, for instance, are to pay P0.40 per kilometer along the closed system area—the portion from Marilao to Pampanga that charges on a per kilometer basis. The open system portion from Balintawak to Marilao shall impose a flat fee of P14 for cars, P25 for buses and P42 for trucks.

Right now, cars pay a toll of 2h centavos per kilometer along the Nlex but bus costs is estimated by LH Manzano at P1.71 per km or a total of P7.67 per trip.

De Jesus says his is to drop to P4.94 each kilometer since the consortium takes over so the total costs for cars is only about P7.41 per km. This means savings of 5h centavos per kilometer for for those to use the new Nlex.

Higher savings

Based on the LP Planades study buses and trucks are to realize even higher savings of P3.50 per km and P5.75 per km, even as toll rates are to increase to 6.23 for buses from 52 centavos and to 7.47 for trucks from 78 centavos.

The for buses during the old Nlex is placed at P21.40 per km, against P12.28 in the new expressway while trucks' VOC of P28.70 is to go down to P14.35 with the new Nlex, according to MNTC.

"If we include travel time, the savings are even much higher at P1.19 per km for cars and P8.04 per km for buses. Apparently, it is some for trucks at P5.75 per km," he says.

De Jesus says the new rates are to be submitted for the Toll Regulatory Board (TRB) for approval by November. The TRB would review whether MNTC's computation in setting up toll rates are in line with the formula set in the supplemental Toll Operations Agreement signed by the consortium with the government in 1998.

BOT project

The Nlex rehab is a build-operate-and-transfer project. By 2030, the consortium would turn over the Nlex back to the government.

Once the TRB approves the new toll rates, cars and jeeps or class 1 would have to pay P30 for the entire stretch, light trucks or class 2 would shell out P900 and trucks or class 3 would be charged P900.

After a toll fee hike in July, PNCC now charges P41 for cars and jeeps, P82 for light trucks and P122 for heavy trucks that would pass along the Nlex.

De Jesus stresses that on the average, class 1 vehicles or cars and SUV travel only an average of 11 kilometers.

"This means that the average motorist would pay only P75 when they use the Nlex. Only 7 out of 100 motorists travel the full length," he insists.

MNTC's toll structure is computed on a flat P42 for cars traveling from Balintawak to Marilao and P1.40 per kilometer from Marilao to Sta. Ines.

The fee scheme is computed of a base rate of P14 and P84 constant per km set in 1998 which were adjusted later depending on inflation and fuel surcharges.

Based on the Nlex, MNTC is also allowed to increase the fees by 5 percent each year even if inflation and the exchange rate were constant. The toll fee scheme was computed using a 14 percent return-on-investment for the private group, says De Jesus.

De Jesus claims the only consistent MNTC sought from the government was on sovereign that the state would abide with the rate formula specified in the deal.

If the government would decide to subsidize the Nlex rates, then it would have to reimburse MNTC the difference multiplied to the actual expressway users, the MNTC chief explains.

"Before we crush financial doom, creditors realize the signing of the Nlex and the turnover of right-of-way. Those documents serve as guarantee that the project is viable and therefore, they will be paid," says De Jesus.

Creditor financed P203 million of the $355 million project.

The PNCC has for the first 14 kilometers starting from Balintawak classified as open to charges compared to the P95 that the Skyway charges for the 9 kilometers of open highway from Magallanes to Buendia.

AERIAL view of the North Luzon Expressway

More RP homes in remote areas using sun power

From page B1

gross price that an industry player or can receive.

SWA's edged out Industrande's Lumar Power Solar Power Plant from Belgium and Ekant's Surya Kiri Offshore Wind Farm from Denmark.

The two projects bagged second and third places, respectively.

Of more than 1,000 nominated energy projects worldwide, some of which came from these countries, the Philippines and India were the only in the region that had entries that reached the 8 slots.

PNCC bagged the award by capturing the highest score after being evaluated using the following criteria: sustainability and efficiency, innovative approach, cost benefit, and replication potential.

The seven firm received 10,000 Euros (about P714,000) and a 30-kilogram bronze statue for bagging the award.

A television crew from Austria's National TV (as the award was presented in Linz, Austria) also came to the Philippines to document how the project worked and how it affected the lives of people in areas covered by the projects.

Elsewhere in the Hung area, better lives for many Filipinos and a prestigious award that proves just how world-class the Filipino is.

All these from a program that harnesses the power of one of God's most amazing creations, the sun.

Sunday LIFESTYLE Home

Nippon meets Northern lights

THE LIVING room's (left) color scheme echoes that of the Chinese-made divider (above). The two black folding chairs are of Italian origin.

Text by Alix T. Vergara
Photos by Mondek Cliggett

Can you do your own home interiors and not regret it? Sure, says this designing woman

BEFORE SHE and her husband moved to their condominium unit or one of Emmott's imposing residential towers a few years ago, the wife had already set her heart on a contemporary house with Japanese and Chinese touches.

Instead of hiring the services of an interior designer, as is de rigueur among residents of the upscale address, she was determined to do the place herself. After paying a fortune for the unit, the couple (names withheld upon request) couldn't spare a few pesos more.

Of course, they're just being modest. But despite all the headaches she went through, the wife, who cooks as well as she designs, doesn't regret her decision to roll up her sleeves and put on an interior designer's hat.

"My taste is really eclectic," she says. "I'm partial to the Japanese look, which is a bit sparse. Overall, however, it [the look] always manages to have harmony."

In between managing the family's export business, the couple, especially the wife, scoured Metro Manila in search of ideal furniture and accent pieces. She also had to deal with several contractors and furniture makers, some of whom took almost "forever" to deliver the goods.

"It's a good thing the building's construction had been delayed," the wife says with a chuckle. "Otherwise, we would have moved into a half-empty house."

Unobtrusive yet elegant

The long wait seems to have been worth it. Unobtrusive yet elegant Santiner pieces fashioned from assorted hardwood and made into beds, dressers, cabinets, tables and a huge chapter, all of which the wife herself designed, now occupy places of honor in the unit's three bedrooms, living room and dining area.

For want of a specific line or inspiration, the custom-built pieces can be described as Japanese meets Scandinavian. They're so closely made and sturdy that they are an ideal counterpoint to the oversized Chinese antiques the wife has brought from mainstream homes in Avis of Asia, Old Asia and Points East. She promptly converted them either as accessories or accent pieces to include all the "clutter."

As they had to leave almost all their old furniture pieces behind, the wife also commissioned Spanish-based designer Benjie Reyes to design and execute a number of accent pieces. Two such pieces are high back mandarin chairs featured in a corner of the living room.

"Even my clothes were left in the old house," says the wife. "That's another thing we learned about condo living. Due to limited space, you can't afford to hang on to things you have no use for."

Since the wife's closet, for instance, has just enough space for her clothes, she now has to part with one item to make room for another. One of the few things she

CONTINUED TO

A HUGE chapter rises for space with a pair of accent chairs and a corner table by Benjie Reyes in a corner of the living room.

USER-FRIENDLY kitchen manages to look spic-and-span.

ITALIAN-MADE leather furniture add a dash of neon-feel to the entire setup. The side of vases on the coffee table was the Manchurian army's version of the inexpensive table.

Nippon meets Northern lights

THE WIFE'S floral arrangement (above) and fruit accent piece (right)

Front page | 2

couple brought with them when they made the big move was a considerable navy bookcase that now sits along the corridor leading to the bedrooms. It has been a silent witness to the family's changing fortunes.

"We were still living in an apartment in Ginza when we bought that bookcase," says the wife. "For some reason, it always manages to fit in wherever we go."

Best option

The couple, whose former address was in San Juan, found the old house too big for them. They promptly turned it into their office. After all, their eldest son is now married and practices medicine in Baguio, while their youngest son is also based most of the time there. Condo living has become the best option for the empty-nesters.

"You can look up the sun and leave anytime," says the husband, referring to their new home. "Security and maintenance have some bearing also but not as much as the former."

Still, it was no walk in the park to come up with the interesting but distinctive interiors. It was a deliberate effort since the couple wants most of the time in their factory, where they take in more than their fair share of calls.

The living room, for instance, is anchored on several key pieces. A set of light gray leather sofa and armchairs from Italy, a modern-size stone-topped black coffee table and an extra-long wooden buffet table that's equally expansive and difficult to transport.

If anything, the couple's experience with the table is also a cautionary tale for future condo dwellers. It took sometime before the wife finally bought it, as she found it quite big and expensive. In fact, she dilly-dallied at first on it because her husband is ill.

"I was thankful since I don't have to think about it anymore," she says. "But lo and behold, when I went back to the shop several days later, I saw the same table. It was already being sold at a discount."

The fellow who bought the table, whom the wife assumed was also from Ilocos, was said to have returned it since it wouldn't fit in the elevator. She should have listened to her instincts and simply let go of it, but the markdown was too good to refuse. Besides she was really in love with the table, which she finally eventually paid for in lieu of a new set of golf clubs he intended to give her for Christmas.

NANKING-TOPPED dining table beside a series of wall-to-wall beveled mirrors

When delivery time came, the wife was "conveniently" out shopping. The task of receiving and supervising the deliverymen to land the huge piece moved floors up fell on the poor husband. And, boy, did they have to wrestle their brains to figure out a way to do it since the table—you guessed it—wouldn't fit in the elevator or the stairs.

Luckily, a maintenance team was inspecting the elevator that day. They suggested that they transport the table on top instead of inside the elevator. That they eventually did, with two men holding the table as it rested on its side as the lift climbed slowly on "inspection" mode.

"I was so afraid my husband would kill me," says the amused wife. "But I asked my friend to accompany the hubs that day."

Retro-modern look

The Italian-made sofa, which passed the wife's exacting criteria on what a relaxing couch should be, imparts the living room with a retro-modern look. For a dash of color, she added two cut-lobed red leather chairs, also from Italy, into the mix.

Since she and her husband have several floors up, she used the model unit downstairs as a gauge every time she intended to buy furniture. In some senses, everything fell into place, including the color scheme, which the wife says was heavily matched the colors found on a Chinese-made divider she bought at Ikea's.

Light gray on lobed red, brown, black, off-white and touches of gold and silver are also the very same colors that make up the figures drawn on several of the divider's panels, two of which now function as double-doors leading to the powder room.

"Isn't it amazing?" the wife gushes. "Yeah, ing on the divider was retrofitted. The same thing happened to our bedroom, where the chaise lounge made of grayish blue leather matched the color of the curtains. It wasn't intentional."

It add an illusion of space to the living room and dining area, the wife had a series of mirrors with beveled edges installed by the dining table, a square 12-seater made from a series of square slabs of black homogony.

The wall's bare sense of the artworks framed, including lithographs by Japanese artist Toko Shinoda, an antique Chinese scroll and, believe it or not, a sheet of lovely Japanese gift wrapping paper the couple bought in San Francisco. They're also proud owners of a bonsai-cut-into Amphoa fusion.

"Don't be too dependent on your interior designer," says the wife. "So long as you know what you want and have the money to get them, don't be afraid to experiment. It's your home, anyway."

One more thing. Be sure that everything you buy fits in the elevator.

E-mail the author at arorguez@inquirer.com.ph

FROM LOWLY gift wrapper to framed work of art

THOR'S eggs

ORIENTAL touch

BAMBOARD echoes house's color scheme

MASTER bedroom

YOUNGEST son's bedroom

GUEST room features a number of furniture pieces this critic designed.

Sunday LIFESTYLE Travel

El Nido beckons

BLACK marble-like rock cliff, wild vegetation and white sand beach

The town has a distinct character derived mainly from towering cliffs of marble and limestone that ring part of the northern Palawan ecodestination

Text and photos
by Amado Mo. Guerrero
Contributor

SECURITY was tight that day on board MV Our Lady of Medjugorje bound for Coron and Puerto Princesa, capital city of Palawan. The military, still mindful of the tragedy that had befallen SuperFerry 14, were visible, and there well-trained, disciplined dogs went around sanchokantly sniffing the bags of the passengers.

It was a 20-hour voyage from Manila. We arrived early the following morning at Coron Port. At, there was the cruise ship MV Coco Explorer, by now something of an old friend, on its way to serve by Coron Island, a major ecotourist destination, with a load of friends from Manila.

That evening the stars were out in full force, despite some thunderstorm earlier and cloudy skies. A quarter hours cruise over Puerto Princesa as the ship approached, gliding over the bay, and the lights of the city began to assemble in the distance.

Fabled town

Upon arrival I was welcomed by my host Nonoy and Ruby Lourenzo. Nonoy is a congenial musician and his family hotel, Seldon, serves as a natural ambassador of Mayor Edward Hagedorn. The Lourenzo children often perform with the group. These are the two girls Ela (now based in Annapolis) and Rhi, and the two boys Jerico and Christian Nicolas.

For this latest trip to Palawan, my accelerations was the elusive, fabled town of El Nido, which has been beckoning to me through the years, although no instructions were forthcoming from the upscale travel sources. From Puerto Princesa to El Nido, which lies 270 km north of the capital, is a long way to bus (about 6 a.m., P350 per. Family Transport or Eulen Joe—each name!).

The trip now take all of eight hours. In our case, it was even longer because of faulty brakes. The driver had to stop three times so that the mechanic—tucked up by a staff complement of about six, with two toolboxes on the roof—could trouble-shoot the failure/problem.

And so "bounty" plunged northward, passing through a long, well-paved highway and then an endless dirt road, through mountain regions, forested areas, Protected Areas ("Mabanpaso Forest"), areas under construction, landslide areas, mangrove areas, glimpses of the sea, dusty trails, detours, military checkpoints ("NPP Intelligence Destroy"), small bridges (12-20T capacity), fields of grass and paths of each other.

The last leg of the journey was Taytay, with its historic Fort Barrow, Santa Monica parish church and panoramic of Taytay Bay with alluring islands in the background. One of them must surely be Apulit, home of Club Med Cinderella.

Past Taytay came a first-ever glimpse of Bacuit Bay, off El Nido, with several islands near the coast filled with mangroves. Like Coron Bay, with its hidden lakes, and Taytay Bay, with its limes-

(CONTINUED ON)

HISTORIC: Ruin
Ruins in Taytay,
Palawan, on the
road to El Nido

CENTURIES-OLD
marble cliffs inside
modern Jardin
House

El Nido beckons

Front page C3

Armed with islands, Ernest Hay, with its hidden lagoons, is one of the glories of Northern Palawan.

It was night when we finally arrived at El Nido, which blurred the town's impact upon me. But even in the darkness, my inquisitive eyes could already discern the towering cliffs of marble and limestone, which, may part of the town, and mirror El Nido—such an distinct character. Without those marvels of the sea, El Nido would be just another coastal town.

Black marble wall

The influx of tourists has raised the prices of food stuff in El Nido, and local residents complain about this. One bite of chicken costs more than in Manila, and a plate (small dish) of chicken gheralo goes for P40 in an eatery. The town has many budget inns and lodging houses, but they are not easy to spot as entrances.

As for me, thanks to a good friend Sonny Cope, Mike Bodi (part...) was lucky enough to be accommodated at the Jardin House, a stationary of engineer Jimmy Fernandez and his sister Teresita F. Lantzend (married to a French man). The Fernandez family has converted their hotel-shaped Miniloc Island into a Marian shrine ("Look for the heart of my Son in Montalve") and a retreat house with modern facilities.

Roomy and comfortable, with a garden

FAMILY morning at El Nido beach

SENTINEL of the sea

trellis, Jardin House stands right beside a steep wall of black marble with white-streaked streaks, and trees and vegetation up high.

Caretakers Rhoda, Abe and Tessy were very attentive. With some amusement, she recalled that some guests were afraid that portions of the marble wall would fall upon the house. But the mission house has been there for years—and the cliff has been there for centuries—and nothing has happened.

You wake up early and the first thing you see outside your window is the wall. You can reach out to touch it—well, almost.

Just walk around town for a few minutes and you will soon come upon the beach front and get a preview of what Puerto Nay has in store for you. There's a big, wide beach area and covered cabanas and accommodation, pump boats, tires, houses and nearby islands.

Boating competition by the pier in the garishly pink building of the Philippine Ports Authority Extension and Info- programs from Elnino Manila are based on El Nido, but there are no newspapers. Electricity is on only from 5 p.m. to 5 a.m.

For the budget-conscious, another house from further left. (Pink.) rises in the form of a cruise around the bay, and beach at Miniloc Island. Nearby is Tapiutan Island, also owned by the Fernandezes, with cottages that used to serve as military barracks. At least one navy patrol boat always hovers around the area to protect the resorts.

Hidden lagoon

We passed by Miniloc Island, and young Japanese tourists who were kayaking and snorkeling, waved at us. Some were preparing to the famous hidden lagoon, accessible only by a narrow passage in the wall.

Actually the Solarian seemed to a paradise swimming in the exuberantly rough coastal waters. (It is supply in February from October to February.)

Like the Calamian Group of islands further north and the Gita of Tubbataha, the islands of Bacuit Bay have different shapes and contours, ranging from massive and fortress-like to graceful and enchanting. One tapered to needles is dropper at reef, and is thus called Shell-capped Island.

Ah, face to face or just with El Nido's seascape, marine life, black marble and limestone cliffs garlanded by sea of flowers and lichen trees, and jagged rock formations. They don't seem than impressive from a distance, especially if you have seen comparable wonderlandscapes in Palawan. But as the pump boat approaches, you feel awed by the natural grandeur. These cliffs are said to be millions of years old.

This is part of the El Nido-Taytay Managed Protected Area, one of seven such in the country (others are: The others are: Calauit Game Preserve & Wildlife Sanctuary, Coron Island Protected Area, Malampaya Sound Land and Seascape Protected Area, Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park, Tubbataha Reef Marine Park, and Olongapo Island Game Refuge and Bird Sanctuary).

LIFE (people) moves along the pedestrian

Sunday LIFESTYLE

WONDERFUL couple Ed and Mila Locsin

UNFORGETTABLE friends: Phyllis Ida, Inez Barrozona and Marisa Concepcion

SHANGRI-LA big boss Tom Zita and elegant wife Kathy

METRO Society cover girl Marisols Zobel and editor in chief Lis Bernardo

VIBRANT Foundation founder Dominique Lenoir with Dennis Valdes

EDIBLE names: Candy and Cheese Ledesma

Wearing my SM tiara in the presence of true royalty

Tessa Prieto-Valdes

IN the sea of invitations that clustered my dresser, one very cute invite stood out recently because of the guest of honor named on it.

When the female H.R.H. are serious before a name, she's heartbreak quikstix at the prospect of meeting true royalty. Only the heirs of European thrones can be given the title "Her Royal Highness" and these fortunate women are the only people who can legally wear tiaras.

So what does one wear to a prince handkissing dinner for H.R.H. Princess Caroline of Hanover? Defeating the royalty code of ethics, I did wear a tiara since I was not seated at her table anyway. In fact, my table was as far from the inner sanctum, the intimate circle that crowned the princess, that I could even have brought my Boyd Camp Saki guards as props and I wouldn't have been noticed. The only way I would see her up close was via the giant video screen near our table.

I wouldn't have even dared to wear a crown if the Princess was within meters of my table. Sometime ago in the colorful Marcos era, former First Lady Imelda Marcos wore a tiara to a royal gala dinner, but she was told that in Europe only true royalty wore crowns. So she wore clip stars on a hair accent in the back. I would have done the same, most probably.

Paparazzi frenzy

The invitation indicated, "Dress: will be dressed at 7:15 p.m." My well-suited husband Dennis and I (with my feathery white jacket from New Yorker) entered at 8:30 p.m., together with Hollywood President Edward Belton. With all the plumage taking our pictures, he said he had never had so much paparazzi greeting him.

Indeed the doors were closed on the dot, but luckily we were ushered in and ended up sitting table outside PR girl Annie Borgen, who became the smoking buddy of the Princess in between her charity visits earlier that day. Nicely enough, no photos were taken of either lady smoking. And it's a good thing Master Bossy was not around to enforce the no-smoking rule.

My beauty transformation team from Stephanie Salon, Victor Ortega and Danny Batallon, made me look like the girl in "The Princess Diaries." I originally planned to wear my dolls-Kitty tiara but it was returned to GSP Gate eight after our commercial shoot. So I wore the tiara I bought at SM last year. The piece was inexpensive but made of very high-quality Swarovski crystals.

Miss Sutton's haute couture line did a second run in the Amanda Phillippines Helmet Foundation dinner. Dots added more curls and semi-formal wear. I think Princess Caroline must have been very impressed. I hope Inno would soon be designing for royalty. I am proud to say he made my wedding gown, one that defied all the traditional rules of wedding design.

PLEASE TURN TO

I violated royal protocol, but I was seated so far from Princess Caroline nobody noticed anyway

PRINCESS Caroline on the big screen as seen from my table

METRO roundtab. Curio Tadiar, Thelma San Juan, Jericho Rosales, D. Bay Trobio and Ervin Lopez

FRISSY pair Jenna Lopez and me in a Jun Escario gown

ABS-CBN boss Gabby Lopez with Vivian Pacheco-Lo and Monique Villarosa

CLASSY ladies, Bea Zobel Jr., Melissa Mariel, Patsy Zobel and Margie Moran-Floirendo

EDITOR-at-large Philip Cu-Unjieng and Cory Quirino

Wearing my SM tiara in the presence of true royalty

HSBC CEO Warren Manning and lovely wife Julie

BASIL Mamalora and Mia Bernardino with Andrew Gan

STYLISH beauties, Melissa Morris Fikaris and Josephine Kenz

MEDAZZ LINK! Maly Hechanova and Rocco Angeles

STANDING ovation for fashion genius Inno Sarao

H&P couple Eric and Candy Nuno

MISS EARTH Unsookim with Miss Mondor to Lidth from left) winning Best in National Costume on the InterContinental Hotel

SCHOOL friends, Cristeen Tamano and Monica Alviera

ISM perfume creator Stephane Bertrier and son Francois, with Lior and Mai Mai Lachmanyan in the middle

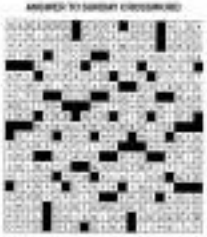
CLOSE family Mary Ballon and Maren Marcos

PRETTY sisters, Lizette Cojuangco and Monique Bacani

BHKI moms, Margarita Fores, Sun Edquia and Gina Roxas

GENEROUS ladies Monica Santos, Ivng Vasquez and Baby Cruz

ANSWERS TO SUNDAY CROSSWORD



HSBC CEO Warren Manning and lovely wife Julie

BASIL Mamalora and Mia Bernardino with Andrew Gan

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GENEROUS ladies Monica Santos, Ivng Vasquez and Baby Cruz

ANSWERS TO SUNDAY CROSSWORD

Proceed to page F8

The most feminine, flowing evening gowns in a rise of colors were on parade. The models were all beautifully made up by master stylist Patrick Ramos, who was also privileged to do Princess Gaye. Her makeup, to striking contrast over the elaborate jewelry accents and feather hairpieces which called her my name-no-more.

The gowns of Gaye also graced the cover of the Philippine Tatler. Gaye, staff editor Aimee Sue Chiga is busy these days preparing for the magazine's big kids ball next month. He is also more focused and excited with work because of some new competition that recently entered the market.

New society rag

This month was the launch party of the newest society magazine with an astounding editorial team, Metro Society. Though the venue at the Luna Building, frankly, was too tight for the numerous "Who's Who" guests, it seemed was to be quite intimate, as ABS-CBN Publishing's president, Tessa Lopez, used the occasion to announce that his sporty wife Jessa was pregnant. It must be the right pharmacy position for baby making this year?

The most colorful spread in Metro Society is the article by Joe Cruz on the closet showdown between business Super's Tan Yap and me. The verdict? That's for you to find out when you pick up your copy of Metro Society.

In spite of escalating prices for printing and paper, there seems no end to the emergence of new magazines. Now that Oriental Print Trust can produce glossy magazines more economically, many have opted to print locally instead of abroad. But it could outprinting to save as many specialized titles, like The Warrior (which focuses on lawyers) or Slackbook (for the modeling world) or lose (no those happily gay).

One new large magazine to-be called ABS, Dhanlia Night

Like got me to be their cover girl this month. This ultimate guide to the city's lifestyle and culture is perfect for visiting tourists and Metropolitans.

Last Friday was the launch of Appetizer, a new food magazine with Lorraine Belmonte of Mega Magazines as editor in chief. Well, to be honest, the main reason I noticed the invitation was that it came in a custom package with delicious cookies from Sugarhouse. In my current preggo state, anything edible is priority.

And two weeks ago, the Miss Earth participants had a Costume Parade (not as the InterContinental Hotel). I was able to get so many ideas for Halloween! But when I saw them flat bellies and towering heights, I had to rethink my final costume outfit.

For Halloween, I want to be a princess with a real crown, and if I can be a helping hand to the less fortunate, I will be Mother Teresa in a crown. But with the way I am eating, I might as well be the Marshmallow Man. Happy Halloween!

E-mail me at

THE PRINCESS is moved to tears by a presentation of young, unwed mothers at the Makati Coliseum.

MORE of the neglected get special royal attention.

THE 27 YEAR-OLD royal wave shares her table with tourists in Iloilo. Virtuosa's home for special children (above). At right, she makes a stop along a dark, narrow alley in a depressed area in Makati. At times, the princess has to bend to avoid the drying laundry and whatever suspended along her path.

Princess of Hearts

Text and photos by Cherbir V. Mural

PRINCESS! Sa siya nalingat? Ang simple lang niya, (Is she really a princess? She's so simple.")

Such a tribute, said devoted simply in a rusty pure mix - tubier Tabos and Tausug-al, Ignacio Jaslyn, Princess Caroline of Monaco made a lasting mark on a youth detention center in Manila early Monday morning. Her quite the elaborately dressed, dated, fairy tale princess mold shaped by the center's wards her as what.

"Mukha akong mahal (She seems nice)," said Jellery, 17, a vagrant youth in the custody of the Department of Social Welfare's Reception and Action Center (RAC) in Ariesville.

RAC was the first stop of the Monaco royal's three-day Manila visit to raise funds for Virtuosa Foundation, a beneficiary of Manila Metrobank, a humanitarian organization founded by the princess' late mother, Princess Caroline took over the reins of Manila Metrobank 10 years ago.

It was the princess's first visit to the country. Arriving promptly at 9 a.m., the princess went directly to the decrepit RAC building, and into the tiny room for infants and unwed mothers. The diminutive royal ran her 160 hip and quietly consoled with the young mothers who were in RAC's custody.

Focus on street kids

Virtuosa's primary mission is to look after the welfare of street children. Founded in 1992 by Dominique Lemay, a French-man married to a Filipina, the non-government organization has also included vagrant families, abused women and children, but has concentrated its efforts on the streets. Virtuosa is a benefactor of RAC, and the youth detention center right across it, the Manila Youth Reception Center (MYRC).

Lemay, with lawyer Eric Hidalonga, president of Antonio Philippines and Virtuosa's legal counsel, had met with the princess on several trips to Monaco for Manila Metrobank's events. It was on these visits that Princess Caroline learned of Lemay's work, and expressed her desire to help him in his efforts.

The princess' arrival, Lemay said, "will bring focus on the plight of children in the Philippines... and inspire Filipinos in the center."

Virtuosa has 300 children directly under its care, all housed in 12 homes. Up to 600 more take her in the areas of Payatas in Quezon City, Tondo, Manila, and Ilaya (Baybayan, Makati), are getting support from the NGO, making it the "biggest foundation in the Philippines."

"But I only have people know of us," Lemay bemoaned. "So we would [want to see. It told the princess], Madame, maybe the people will know us more."

Princess Caroline, eldest child of Prince Rainier of Monaco and the former Hollywood actress Grace Kelly, arrived in the country alone, contrary to earlier reports that said she would be accompanied by her husband, Prince Ernst August of Hanover. Except for the black-tie fundraiser, she released any hoopla for her 27-hour, but schedule kept under tight wraps.

Exclusive access

Closely guarded by burly bodyguards, the press was barred from talking or going near the princess. Photographers weren't also allowed into the RAC/MYRC premises [and for all her other activities, for that matter], prompting some foreign photographers to peep themselves up against the iron fence wrench, paparazzi style.

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, who spent all the princess in inaugurating the Virtuosa Pavilion now building for adult vagrants, even had a minor spat with the princess' official photographer when the latter prevented the mayor's photographer from taking photos.

Before leaving for the airport Wednesday night, however, the princess was briefly allowed exclusive access to the press, a mother of four children herself. she said she never love the Manila visit had affected her personally.

"It was very moving to be with the children," the princess said. "I saw all kinds of children, many children with very special needs, children in jail, children who are given another chance."

Crimes against children

On Monday, the royal lingered in the cramped MYRC detention center right across RAC, where 136 youths were detained. The center has an ideal capacity of 100.

"She was very emotional," Lemay said of the princess. "She was very touched" at the children's presentation, including a Thrilling dance. "But she felt the situation was so terrible. She said it was not normal to put 40 children together in a 20-sq-m room. She couldn't understand how all these people could fit in such a small space."

The young detainees are rounded together based on their physical size, said Blandina de Leon, the social worker who heads MYRC. This is to curtail the smaller children from being bullied by the bigger boys. In the past, riots and a jailbreak had taken place in the center.

"The princess was concerned about the small sitting area," De Leon said. "I explained to her that we feed them in batches."

She told the heiress she hopes to set up "improvements in the conditions of the center in Amsterdam for children" the next time she visits.

Despite its decade-limited state, De Leon said MYRC's budget was further slashed following the retire of a third crisis. Their budget is still for 150 children. It's good that vegetables reimbursed (from illegal evasion) are brought here to feed our wards."

Lemay said Virtuosa has been working to rehabilitate the same particular children in Manila. The last time something was done for the facilities was in 1992. He had the new building finished in two months at time for the princess' arrival. "Now it's done because the princess is coming). But [on other days], it's really, really bad."

Most of MYRC's wards are awaiting trial for crimes like theft ("usually cell phones"), rape, robbery and other misdemeanors. Others are "rescued" from the city jails in Manila and Malabon, as they were being lumped with hardened criminals, added Hidalonga.

Hidalonga heads the local chapter of Amnesty, or World Association of Children's Friends. The Philippines is the first country for state of Amnesty in Asia. Founded by Princess Grace in 1982, initially in support of anti-abortion, abused children and orphanages, Amnesty now supports humanitarian efforts in anti-torture, in prevention of child-ethical and legal rights.

"We have proposed to the United Nations to make crimes against children as crimes against humanity," Hidalonga said. "This will protect children from child pornography especially in the Internet, sex trafficking..."

On Monday afternoon, Princess Caroline was moved to tears when a group of young unwed mothers and pregnant girls rendered the song "Greatest Love of All," as a late lunch with Virtuosa's wards and street dwellers and organizers at the Makati Coliseum. Some of the young women had infants cradled in their arms.

PRINCESS Caroline of Monaco, for all her simplicity has a commanding presence, a quiet authority that's proving beneficial in bringing attention to her causes.

The Princess of Monaco spent almost her entire first visit to the Philippines with needy children

Courtesy call

But that was perhaps the only poignant moment in the afternoon for the princess who had just come from a courtesy call with the President, who reportedly promised the princess to speed up the adoption process to six months or a year. Lemay said, it normally took two years to legally adopt a child.

Smartly dressed in a navy skirt, silk polka dot shirt and black low-heeled pumps, Princess Caroline visibly enjoyed the visit, always using non-direct pronouncements. She playfully cradled kids on her lap, including a young girl Lemay is in the process of adopting.

The princess's potluck of the simple meal, consisting of pancit, rice, chicken and fish dishes, typical of Filipinos. With more rank came with Virtuosa wards to have their photos taken with the princess.

On Monday night, a dinner-fundraiser was held at the Makati Shangri-La to discuss Antonio's EPI proposal. "There is only one constant, the world's recognition that children are treasures," the princess said in her speech.

The also visited the children who had gotten ill from the toxic smoke left by the former Ulí Base in Subic and Clark. The royal had personally asked US President George W. Bush "to provide humanitarian aid and compensation to the victims and their families." She was, however, told that the Philippine government had agreed to free Americans of any legal obligations after the departure of the American military forces.

One of the rare rape victims to MYRC custody hugged the princess to help her see her better Clarissima. "The princess, in turn, asked Antonio to make sure the girl gets her visit, and that the girls be taken care of. She also made him promise to help reunite some of the children with their families. "I told him I'll follow up on his promise to the princess," Lemay said.

Before leaving Wednesday night, the princess spent the morning viewing several of Virtuosa's homes in a depressed area in Makati. A young orphan dressed in a bella costume shyly sat on her lap. The royal gently rocked her as the lady-star playing in the background. The girl wrapped her arms around the princess' neck, reluctant to let go.

Quiet grace

Princess Caroline had a quiet grace, but an imposing presence that commanded respect. Everywhere she went, flashbulbs were held agog. Even at the dinner fundraiser Monday night, her attendants was a mark name as the bejeweled local guests. At the dinner, the princess reportedly told a visiting senator's assistant she didn't bring jewelry on her travels.

She reportedly did ask to see pieces from a local jewelry known for beads and pearls. Praised for time—with no assistance in tow, she packed her own bags, and the princess entered only for the jeweler's wending to pursue on her own home.

Lemay said the princess promised to try her best to help him in his fight for the rights of children in the Philippines. She was also quick to reassure that Virtuosa is working largely without help from the government, even as Lemay couldn't help but feel that certain politicians were around "only to have their photos taken with the princess."

E-mail the author at cmural@inquirer.com.ph

WITH FINLANE: founder Dominique Lemay and Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay at the Makati Coliseum launch with Virtuosa wards

WITH SPADE Phils. president Eric Hidalonga (partly hidden), Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and Lemay at the RAC/MYRC compound

The rituals of November

By Agnes Perez
Contributor

ON THE FEAST of All Souls, the entire ramos will light candles. Even those are as red-light is to a stylist to behold—seem of golden, flickering flames as memorial paths and cemeteries—our tribute to the dear departed.

The lighting of candles, offering of flowers and (for some) also food are the rituals of November. Rituals are more important than we realize—they connect us more being to more realities.

Final destination

I will light seven candles, a promise while one for my mother, the soul knows or who helped, design and craft my being; a blue candle for my son Xavier, blue as the sun day representing he generosity of spirit which we will treasure forever; a candle of deep green for my brother Ramon, to symbolize the gift of creativity, his legacy to us in his poetry and song; a magenta candle for Ebet, shining especially for his children who need to feel a father's presence and guidance in their lives; a rose green candle for Joey, in appreciating healing and two cats, Shia of turquoise—for Dandelion and Shortie—as for Ito for Otto and Mahiwa.

Seven candles lit among bouquets of flowers... roses and mums...for celebration and remembrance.

But mistakes will be clogged with people making their way home to provisions where their loved ones are buried, where they will also light their candles and offer their flowers. As pots will be in different, teeming with people carrying special bouquets. All could lead to everyone's final destination—the cemetery.

Mission to pack: begin to fill up with people as early as two days before the feast. Years ago, Malacañan chains are opened, banned cemetery, police and cops decide from our rock and jazz. Barbecue grills and other cooking implements are laid out. Floral chairs and tables are in place. Mahjong sets, cards and other games are brought in. The sentimentals are the first thing, even as we remember our dead.

Afterlife

The rituals for the dead are embedded in our culture. We make way for the day of remembrance with no one needing to point us. Nor have for those who have passed on, our need to commemorate their lives, our hunger to not forget—all these explain why.

The function of ritual is to connect the inner (our soul) with the outer (daily reality). Ritual is necessary for our collective. Societies that respect the past know this best. They protect and revere ritual.

> When we light candles and offer flowers, we not only honor our departed loved ones, but also ourselves

The ritual of All Souls' and All Saints' days acknowledge our acceptance of an afterlife, another dimension of time and other we can see and touch. Most importantly these rituals underline our strong sense that there is a part of our being that does not perish when the body dies—the soul.

We are ordinary everyday things—candles and flowers and food—to express what is not material. Candles to symbolize illumination and connection, flowers for celebration and food for sustenance.

Candles have been used in rituals since Day was discovered. In the early days they broke the bondage of darkness, and daily life continued beyond sunset because now there was candlelight. When we light a candle, we consciously live and beyond, acknowledging the continuation between the here and now and the forever.

Pretty days after death, we keep a candle lit in our home shrine to guide the soul as it journeys, gathering regions. It is a vigil candle to mark the transition from this plane on to the next—a reception of engagement with spiritual forces to help the departed move on.

Raucous party

Flowers are for celebration and remembrance. Filipinos, particularly, can turn anything into a festivity. Remember Eden Delano who requested a bloody revelations with flower offerings by nuns and little children in soldiers' attired in the world cup—Holy Mother!

To me time our remembrance of the dead into one raucous party—flowers, food, music and laughter fill the air after the pictures for Undertaker cold. Living it up is what we do best, and the best way to honor the dead is to celebrate our lives.

There is special food cooked for the feast of the dead. In the provinces, even the poorest have at least two cakes of all persuasions and varieties. Bibingka, kalamay, cassava cake, suman sa lihiya, puto, cuchinta, puto pinoy—the list is endless.

Food has a special connotation when used for the dead. Only food for the dead is regarded better than enough for a good, mature reason